

Memoirs of the RAJ



G. R. KALA

MEMOIRS OF THE RAJ
KUMAON (1911-1945)

NOT FOR SALE

GOVIND RAM KALA

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MEMOIRS OF THE RAJ

Armed with an Intermediate certificate, Govind Ram Kala set out for a job in 1911. The opportunities then were excellent. Starting as a teacher, he did his stint as sub-deputy inspector of schools in the Naini Tal Tarai. He went over to the Survey of India and left it because he did not like the life there. He was nominated naib tahsildar, worked his way up and retired as deputy collector in the U. P.

Life was raw and interesting in the hill districts and the Tarai in the early twenties and thirties. These memoirs are a magistrate's bird's eye view of the Raj at the grass roots. He talks of the temperamental collectors who had to be looked after—Wyndham for one, a friend of Jim Corbett, who shared the latter's passion for tigers—Pandit Pant, the lawyer, Sarla Behn, who had to be sent to prison for "picking lice", of his brushes with authority and the unorthodox ways the Raj was run. Govind Ram Kala retired from the U.P. Civil Service in 1945.

PREFACE

I suppose eighty-three is too late in the day to publish memoirs but at times one has to yield to an inner compulsion. That was a comparison of modern times with the bad good-old-days when the Government was run by a community of dedicated patricians not tangled in red tape and consensus. But they did deliver the goods. Nationalism and democracy were new-fangled ideas then. Authority was seldom questioned and the administration functioned efficiently without let and hindrance. This is also to put the record straight of the much-maligned Raj and the white man's burden.

As an underling of the Raj for thirty-one years—retired as a deputy collector in 1945—I had the privilege of watching it closely at the district level and also the men of the Indian Civil Service who headed it. There were some wholly dedicated to the people and others who bided their time hunting and fishing with all the time to spare in a more gracious age.

The best one of the I.C.S. I worked with was W. W. Finlay, a fiercely upright Scotsman who wrote his private letters with his own ink and sent his bearer to post them. For official letters he used Government stationery and his peon.

The most colourful was Percy Wyndham, dour and foulmouthed, a man who spoke the dialect like a native. He devoted all the leisure he had to tigers, maintaining a retinue of his own Mirzapur trackers. There were others too of the tribe: Dible, Grant, Clay, Mumford, Ibbotson, Stiffe, Baynes, Soloway and Donaldson. At least two were dyed-in-the-wool empire

builders who successfully split the Brahmins and the Kshatriyas in Kumaon.

The first of the Indian I. C. S. tribe I met was Dharma Vira and the last, S.S. Nehru, both equally remarkable in their own ways, the former for his nationalism and good manners and the latter for his scholarship. They both did not quite fit in the orthodox I. C. S. hierarchy.

At times nationalism asserted itself and the brown saheb followed the dictates of his conscience. Then there were clashes and mutual distrust. As a magistrate, I sent Congressmen to prison and did not like it, assuaging my conscience with lighter punishment. Most distressing was the trial of Sarla Behn, the white disciple of the Mahatma. There too I let her go with a light term.

The following pages also touch on the history of the Congress movement in Kumaon in the thirties and forties and the careers of some Congressmen who did well in later years. They too were men with human failings, some more dedicated than others.

The common man had absolute faith in the impartiality of the white ruler though not so much in the brown minions of the Raj. The white saheb stayed on the pedestal till the mass movement of 1930 which pulled him down. Further demoralisation came with provincial autonomy when many ended up as bitter men.

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1. *The Job Hunt*

AH, to have an intermediate certificate in 1911, to be one of the chosen dozen in the whole district of Garhwal, what now comprises the two U. P. border districts of Pauri and Chamoli! A high school certificate was good enough to open the portals of the Raj. I was on top of the world. One did not apply for a job then with such a "mighty qualification". I did not have to wait long. As soon as the results were published, I was remembered. Mr V. A. Stowell, Deputy Commissioner, Garhwal, summoned me. He said I could start as a clerk on Rs. 25 and later be nominated for naib tahsildarship in the Kumaon division. I considered Rs. 25 too low a salary for my qualifications and decided not to accept the offer. But as I did not want to give Mr. Stowell offence, I told him I needed time. Mr. Stowell would not give in. He made me apply for naib tahsildarship then and there.

A riding certificate had to be submitted with the application. Mr Stowell fixed a date for the riding test and asked me to come with a pony. I had never been on a horse before, so I practised riding on a local Bhotiya pony. These are small horses but sure footed. Pandit Chatura Datta Joshi, son of Rai Bahadur Dharma Nand Joshi of Almora, was the naib tahsildar at Pauri. He took me to the Deputy Commissioner's

bungalow with his pony. I rode on the road below and obtained a certificate that I could ride a hill pony with reasonable competence.

Mr Stowell recommended me strongly to the Commissioner for the nomination. This over, he pressed me to accept the job he had offered. But I could not persuade myself to accept it. His idea was that I could gainfully occupy myself learning office work till I got the call for naib tahsildarship. Mr Stowell, the first white administrator I met, was a tall elderly person with an overdose of the milk of human kindness. He served as Deputy Commissioner, Garhwal, for about 10 years and loved the district and the people. His indifferent health was the main factor why he chose Pauri, a town 5,000 feet high facing the Himalayas. Mr Stowell lived like a hermit in the Deputy Commissioner's bungalow on a wooded hill overlooking the town. Of course, he had a butler, bearer, washerman, sweeper, water-carrier, syce and a gardener. That's how the Deputy Commissioners lived then.

I was to see him for the last time nine years later at Lucknow, where I had gone to appear in the tahsildar's examination in 1920. A lot of things had happened in between. About them I shall write later. He was the superintendent of the examination and was visibly moved when I presented myself for the Urdu test. He started talking about the people and things in Garhwal. Half an hour went by, and someone had to remind him that there were other candidates as well.

Teaching in the Plains

With the application for naib tahsildarship posted, and Mr Stowell's offer for a clerk's job rejected, I applied for the post of a teacher at the Shyam Sunder Memorial High School at Chandausi, in Moradabad district, on a salary of Rs. 35 a month. I received a reply saying I must join at once. Thirty-five sounded better than twenty-five in the hills. I found later it was a mistake. I took my cook with me, hired a house on Rs. 5 a month and went to school to teach. The headmaster, Mr Mukerjee, having satisfied himself that I was well up in English, asked me to teach English and history to Classes 6, 7 and 8.

Oppressed by the heat of the plains, my cook, a hillman, deserted me after a month. At the same time, I too found the summer very uncomfortable and made up my mind to quit and return to the hills. I explained the situation to Mr Mukerjee. He did not like the idea. Well, if I did not have a cook, he could make arrangements for my board. I was given a room in the school boarding house. The meals were served from the school kitchen. These cost me Rs. 5 a month. Thinking that I was not satisfied with the salary, the headmaster also arranged a private tuition for me to teach English to a Class 8 boy for two hours a day on Rs. 50 a month. He encouraged me to visit him and lent me books. But I was determined to quit. After six months' teaching, I took casual leave saying that I was sick. As the headmaster did not agree to release me, I sent in my resignation and left. The headmaster wrote asking me to reconsider my decision and return. But when I failed to do so, he sent me home the

balance of my pay by money order. He was a very kind man.

After six months' rest in the hills, I now decided to become a qualified teacher. I applied for a stipend for admission to the Junior Teachers' Training College at Lucknow and got it. It was a one-year course for intermediate-qualified candidates. A Mr MacNestor was the principal of the college. He had two Indian professors to assist him. The principal devoted a good deal of his time to the teaching of English pronunciation, language and literature. The other two taught essay writing, mathematics, history, geography, and school management. Psychology was taught by the principal himself.

I got a second both in theory and practice and was considered specially qualified to teach English and mathematics. With the publication of the results came an offer to the post of a teacher in the Government High School at Srinagar (Garhwal), on Rs. 30 a month. I wrote back I could not accept a salary of less than Rs. 40 a month. The Education Department considered my request unreasonable. It was 1913 now, and I had not had been able to get a steady job.

The Survey of India

An advertisement of the Survey of India for intermediate passed sub-assistant superintendents looked tempting enough. It was an old copy of the paper and I was late by a month. But I was still called to Dehra Dun. Col. Cunningham, the then Surveyor-General interviewed me and accepted me as a trainee on a stipend of Rs. 80 a month. Ours was a group of six. We

learnt drawing at Mussoorie for a few months and then shifted to Dehra Dun to learn actual surveying. My health did not permit me to stand at the plane-table for five to six hours. I fell ill and had to resign. Lt. Chase, our instructor, accepted my resignation and Col. Cunningham did not press for the return of the stipend I had taken.

The Survey days I still remember for an incident. There was a Garhwali peon in the section to which I was attached. He was an elderly person and I used to greet him on the strength of his age. One day, our instructor saw this. He called me aside and told me that I was a trainee officer and it was not proper for me to salute a peon. I told him I always respected age. He dismissed me with a warning this should not happen again.

I now went to Lucknow in search of a job. Through the good offices of a professor in the Junior Teachers' Training College, I was introduced to Mr Bhattacharya, headmaster of Queen's High School. He accepted me as a teacher on Rs. 55 a month. Mr Harrop was the Inspector of Schools of Lucknow division. He paid a visit to Queen's High School. I was teaching history to Class 7 and he was pleased with my teaching. When he left the school, he called me and asked if he could do anything for me. I requested him to nominate me for the post of a sub-deputy inspector of schools. He was willing. I went to his office with an application and he forwarded it to the Director of Public Instruction, U.P., with an excellent recommendation.

The headmaster found in me a willing worker and

gave me even those subjects to teach which I had never studied before. Agriculture was one. I used to study the subject at night to prepare myself for next day's work. When the school closed for the summer vacations, he raised my pay to Rs. 75 on the condition I rejoin after the vacation.

I visited Naini Tal to spend the summer there. Mr Claude de la Fosse, Director of Public Instruction, U.P., was at Naini Tal. I met him in connection with my application and he offered me the post of a sub-deputy inspector at Banda. I told him regretfully that I was a hillman and would find it inconvenient to serve in the plains. He then told me that there would be a vacancy at Naini Tal itself in the near future and that I should apply for it. In the meantime, I saw an advertisement for several posts of sub-deputy inspectors. I met Mr Rust, Assistant Director of Education, U.P., and requested him to give me the Naini Tal post. He said as I had refused the post offered to me at Srinagar, he could not consider my request. I brought to his notice the fact that I now had a wife to support.

"What is your pay in Queen's High School?" he asked. I replied it was Rs. 55 with a promise of Rs. 75 for the next term. He could now see clearly why I had refused the offer. He directed me to see Mr Murray, Inspector of Schools, Kumaon division, and wrote on the back of the visiting card I was to send in that I was a suitable candidate for the Naini Tal vacancy and might be taken. I was pleased with the idea of a job in the hills. Little did I realise then I would be sent to the Tarai, the malarious area

between the hills and the plains. It was aptly called the hillman's graveyard.

Life in the Tarai

The three tahsils of Haldwani, Kaladhungi and Ramnagar at the foot of the Naini Tal hills are known as Bhabar. The Bhabar soil is generally stony but it produces good crops of mustard, rice and wheat. The region, called the Tarai, consists of the tahsils of Bazpur, Gadarpur, Sitarganj and Khatima. The soil of this tract is very fertile but the people who lived there were miserable weaklings on account of malaria. In my time, it was a desolate region under high grass. There were few villages. The population decreased every year on account of the high mortality from malaria and the officers-in-charge of the tahsils made serious efforts to tempt tenants from the neighbouring state of Rampur and the districts of Moradabad and Bareilly. Both Bhabar and Tarai were under dense forest and provided the world's best tiger shooting.

I got my appointment letter in 1914 and I started my career as sub-deputy inspector of schools in the Tarai and Bhabar area of Naini Tal district. A Mr Ram Das of Bareilly was the Deputy Inspector of Schools and I accompanied him on his inspection tours for a month to get acquainted with my duties. I did not like Mr Ram Das. He had contempt for the hillman and made no efforts to hide it. He would pass uncomplimentary remarks against hillmen. One day as he was busy doing this, as was his wont, I asked him to shut up. I warned him if he spoke a word more, he should be prepared to face the consequences. He

was an elderly person and I was only twenty-four. This remonstrance had the desired effect. He stopped saying unpleasant things about hillmen in my presence, but he began to nurse a grudge against me. He bided his time and waited for his opportunity.

I had by now got malaria which kept me bedridden for days in a month. I asked permission to leave the station during the Christmas holidays and went to Pauri for a change. The malarial fever followed me and I was confined to bed for ten days. I sent a telegram to the Deputy Inspector of Schools and later a medical certificate by post.

A Reprimand

When I returned to duty, I received a note saying that I had been reprimanded and an adverse entry made in my character roll for absence without leave. The real fact was that the Deputy Inspector of Schools either concealed the telegram or did not bring it to the notice of the District Board Chairman, Mr Cassels, I.C.S., Deputy Commissioner of Naini Tal, and Mr Murray, Inspector of Schools, Kumaon division. As the Deputy Inspector of Schools did not like me, he had given an exaggerated report on my conduct and asked the District Board Chairman and the Inspector of Schools to make an adverse entry. I did not know what to do. Mr Murray soon came to Kashipur to inspect the middle school and I thought he would do justice if I saw him. I went to the inspection bungalow and sought an interview. But Mr Murray sent word through his peon that I was a quarrelsome fellow and that he would not like to see me. I returned dejected.

I now secured a copy of the telegram I had sent. This I got from Calcutta through the kindness of a telegraphist at Talli Tal, Naini Tal, and went to Sitarganj, where Mr Cassels was camping. I sent in my card and was immediately called. "Can you not find from my face, Sir, that I have been suffering from malarial fever?" was my abrupt question. "I can," he said. I now showed him the copy of the telegram. I asked him if he considered it genuine. He said: "It is genuine." Then I asked him how could he then reprimand me. He kept quiet, thought over it a minute and told me that though I was right, he could not withdraw the remarks because the prestige of the Deputy Inspector of Schools was involved. My disappointment knew no bounds and I told him: "Condemn that head of Government, Sir, who cares more for prestige and less for justice." He flared up and I left the room.

Mrs Cassels happened to be listening from an inner room. In the afternoon, while Mr Cassels was away, she called me and told me there was justice on my side and that she would speak to Mr Cassels about it. But she warned me I should not use violent language again. She took exception to the word "condemn". When Mr Cassels returned in the evening, he called me and said: "I find Mr Ram Das is prejudiced against you and you have been] treated rather shabbily recently. I will write to the Director of Public Instruction not to listen to Mr Ram Das if he makes any reports against you. I am convinced that you are not to blame in this affair. 'Reprimanded and warned' is not such an adverse entry as you think it is, but I

find myself unable to withdraw the remarks." I thanked him but added that I had nothing more to say and that as a last resort, I would go to the Director of Public Instruction to seek justice.

Mr Ghananand Joshi, Assistant Inspector of Schools, Kumaon division, now came on an inspection tour to the Tarai. I was asked to meet him at Kashipur. I received the order at Mahuadabra. It was raining heavily and I hired a bullock cart to reach Kashipur on time. I was late and the Assistant Inspector and the Deputy Inspector of Schools were inspecting a school. I went in, paid my respects to both, but they had not the courtesy to ask me to sit down. I was soaking wet and hungry. I took a stool and sat down. They did not like it, but said nothing. I had recently inspected this middle school and they both began to find fault with my inspection report. I pointed out to them that I was new to the work and with more experience I would do better. I had learnt enough Urdu but was not competent enough to read the textbooks prescribed for the middle school. Mr Joshi now told me that my knowledge of Urdu was not up to the mark. I informed him that I had but six months' service and that by the time I reached his age, I would be able to make myself a Shamshul Ulema. The inspection over, we left the school. On the way, the Assistant Inspector of Schools asked me why the Deputy Inspector was displeased with me. I told him he could ask the Deputy Inspector. He later told him that my health was not good and that I took much more time examining the school registers. In reply, I said my bad health was the curse of God. As for

taking more time to examine the registers, I spent my time and not that of the Deputy Inspector.

But Mr Joshi began to speak rather harshly. I told him I was more qualified than both of them and had better manners. They did not even have the courtesy to ask me to sit down. I also brought to the notice of the Assistant Inspector the fact that I had been reprimanded for no fault of mine and that he should help me in getting the remarks withdrawn.

Scores Settled

But my troubles with Mr Ram Das did not end. In the month of April, the inspectorate staff usually went to the headquarters at Naini Tal. There an office clerk informed me that Mr Ram Das had made some adverse reports against me to be included in the annual administration report of the District Board. Mr G.M. Harper, I.C.S., was the secretary of the District Board and I hastened to him to find out if it was true. During our talk, he told me that no other sub-deputy inspector had done so much to improve the standard of education in the Tarai and Bhabar and that he was very pleased with my work. Mr Ram Das had written against me, but he had paid no attention to it.

The bad entry in my character roll was still disturbing me and I spoke about it to Thakur Jodh Singh Negi, tahsildar at Naini Tal. He was deeply moved. The next day he took the relevant papers from me and went to Mr Claude de la Fosse, Director of Public Instruction. The Director was very much annoyed as the entry had been made without calling

for my explanation. He asked Mr Murray why he had not seen me at Kashipur and rang up Mr Cassels saying the remarks be expunged. They were, to my great relief.

Mr Ram Das was only humbled. Though no inspections were done in the Tarai in the rainy season, he asked me to inspect a middle school at Nanakmata. I packed my things and sent my peon and two porters to the Talli Tal lake-end. Soon I joined them. Mr Murray happened to pass that way. Seeing me, he asked me where I was going. I said I was going to Nanakmata to inspect a school. "Who told you to go there in the rainy season?" he asked. I showed him the order of the Deputy Inspector. He sent his peon to call the Deputy Inspector and asked him why he had asked me to go to Nanakmata during the rainy season. Mr Ram Das kept silent. Mr Murray then showered some choice abuses upon him and told him that as he had already harassed me he would come to grief if there were any more complaints. Mr Ram Das now treated me as an equal and we got along well. I had now completed one year's service and left for the Tarai in the winter to resume work.

2. *Encounter with Mr Wyndham*

ONE day while I was inspecting a school at Kitcha about 8 a.m., a teacher informed me that the Commissioner had come to see the school. I was suffering from fever and had felt too lazy to put on a coat and pants. I was wearing a shirt and pyjamas as the news was given. I was nonplussed. There was no time to change. In a minute, Mr Percy Wyndham was there on his white Bhotiya pony. He alighted near me.

"Who are you ?" he asked.

"A sub-deputy inspector of schools."

"Are you a Brahmin or a Rajput ?"

"A Brahmin, Sir".

"I see Brahmins everywhere in service," he remarked.

"What pay do you get ?"

"Rs. 60 a month."

"And T.A. ?"

"Annas 12 a day".

"From where did you come to Kitcha ?"

"A place about two miles away, Sir."

"What cart hire did you pay ?"

"Annas 4, Sir."

"How is it that you get annas 12 a day as T. A. and you pay only annas 4 ?"

"For longer distances, I have to pay a rupee and

sometimes even more."

"I see."

In the meantime, Niyaz Ahmad, head man of village Kitcha, came and saluted the Commissioner. Mr Wyndham was a great hunter. He spent more than six months of the year in the Tarai and Bhabar shooting tigers. He knew almost all the important people of the Tarai and Bhabar. When I reached Kitcha, Niyaz Ahmad had sent me four seers of fine rice and some vegetables. I had accepted the vegetables but had returned the rice saying he could keep it for a subsequent visit. He had been somewhat annoyed over the rejection of the rice.

The Commissioner now asked Niyaz Ahmad to my face what sort of a man I was. He said he had nothing to do with the officers of the Education Department but he had sent me some rice grown on his own land and that I had been discourteous in returning it. "Did he send you hansraj?" asked the Commissioner. I replied in the affirmative. He then told me that I must accept things from a *pradhan* (headman) to maintain friendly relations with him. I said I had noted it.

Mr Wyndham's eyes then fell on my tent.

"Whose tent is it?"

"It is my tent, Sir."

He entered it. He caught sight of a bundle and asked me what it held.

"A bundle of utensils, Sir."

"Why do you carry this useless load? Can't you find utensils in the villages?"

"I can, Sir, but it takes time to collect them from the village. It facilitates the cook's work if I have

my own utensils."

"I am against *begar* and *bardaish* (forced labour). Do you know it?"

"A sub-deputy inspector cannot demand *begar* and *bardaish*."

The next bundle, which he inspected, contained about five seers of wheat flour and miscellaneous bags of spices, salt and dal.

"Why do you carry five seers of flour? Can't you buy it in the village shops?" he asked.

"Sometimes we get it and sometimes we do not, so we have to make a provision."

Then he asked me to open my box which contained two shirts, a bedsheet, two towels, a brush, looking glass, razor and some shaving blades. Having seen these, he now turned to my bedding.

"Your quilt is heavily stuffed. Is it not?"

"It is, Sir, because nights and mornings are extremely cold in the Tarai and Bhabar."

"Do you keep a private servant to cook for you or do you take work from your peon or *khalasi*?"

"I have a cook, but I have to feed my *khalasi* and peon who do odd jobs for me. The climate is so bad that two are always down with malaria. Those who are well have to look after the sick."

"What are your monthly expenses?"

"About Rs. 15 a month. We consume flour worth Rs. 5 a month, vegetables worth Rs. 5 and use ghee worth Rs. 5. I don't pay for the milk, for the *pardhans* do not accept money for it. I make it a point though to offer annas 2 for it."

It was my fever day and half way through the

interview I began shivering.

"Are you suffering from fever?"

"Yes, Sir."

"Can I help you in any way?"

"You can, Sir. I am a candidate for naib tahsildarship in your list and you can send me to the hills if you so desire."

"How can you be in my list? Are you telling the truth?"

"It is true, Sir."

He took out his notebook and wrote down my name, qualifications, length of service in the Education Department and other particulars.

"When will you come to Naini Tal?"

"Next April," I said.

"Then come straight to me and I shall reserve a post for you. But do not forget to take back the rice from Niyaz Ahmad."

Some months later, I received orders from the Deputy Commissioner, Naini Tal, saying that the Commissioner wanted me to officiate as a naib tahsildar at Ranikhet and that I must be ready to join. Mr Claude de la Fosse, Director of Public Instruction, was not inclined to transfer my services to the Revenue Department in view of my good work but Mr Wyndham went to him personally and got me transferred.

Good-bye to Education

I went to Ranikhet. But even before I reached there, Mr Lomas, Deputy Commissioner of Almora District, had complained to the Commissioner: "You

have sent a raw stripling youth with only 18 months' service as an S.D.I. to run a big tahsil like Ranikhet. I do not think he will succeed." The Commissioner wrote back: "Can't you put up with him for a month or so? I shall post him under a tahsildar after the officiating period."

Mr Dible, I.C.S., was my immediate boss in Ranikhet. To start with, I had great difficulty in investigating police cases but by and by I picked up the work and investigated some theft cases to the satisfaction of Mr Dible. Mr Dible liked touring and I made perfect arrangements for his dak and provisions. He had no complaint against me. It was part of the naib tahsildar's job to look after touring officers. I had soon an opportunity to see Mr Lomas who came to Ranikhet to hold an inquiry into an embezzlement of Rs 4 which a naib nazir of the tahsil had allegedly committed. Syed Izaz Ali, who officiated as sub-divisional magistrate, Ranikhet, for some time, had made the report. The naib nazir had gone senile. He was on the verge of retirement. There was some irregularity though.

Mr Lomas came to the tahsil with the report and asked me what I thought of it. I told the Deputy Commissioner: "None, Sir, will be so foolish as to commit an embezzlement of Rs. 4 on the verge of retirement, forfeit his pension and invite trouble."

"You mean there is no case against him?" asked the Deputy Commissioner.

"There is a technical mistake but he had no intention of cheating," I replied.

"What punishment do you suggest?"

I said he should deposit Rs 4 and he might be retired just now as he had only six months left for retirement. This made a [good impression on the Deputy Commissioner and he accepted my suggestion.

After the inspection, I went to see him off. He made detailed enquiries about me. I told him casually that I had paid my fees to appear as a private candidate in the B. A. examination of Allahabad University, but had dropped the idea on account of my transfer to the Revenue Department where one got no time to study. Mr Lomas told me to take the examination. It would help me in my career, even if I did not succeed. There were only two days left for the examination. He asked me to hand over the charge to a kanungo and proceed immediately to Allahabad. I travelled all the night on horseback and reached Kathgodam in the morning to take the train to Allahabad. I reached there just in time for my English paper.

After the examination—incidentally I did not pass it—I left for Naini Tal as my officiating period at Rani-khet had ended. I called on Mr Wyndham who asked me where I would like to be posted, at Naini Tal or Pauri-Garhwal. I preferred Naini Tal.

World War I was now in full swing. It was the talk of the day. Though nationalism was not that pronounced then, people discussed the news freely and desired the defeat of the British. Every German victory was acclaimed. As a hill station and summer headquarters of the U. P. Government, Naini Tal had a lot of Englishmen. The Englishmen often exhibited racial arrogance in their dealings with the Indians. This was more so at Naini Tal.

I volunteered my services for the Labour Corps and an entry was made in my character roll by Mr Wyndham himself. My health was indifferent and Mr Grant, Deputy Commissioner, Naini Tal, did not allow me to go.

Tiger Hunter

Tiger hunting was Mr Wyndham's first love. He spent most of his career hunting either in Mirzapur district (the Wyndham falls are named after him) or in the Naini Tal Tarai. He was Jim Corbett's friend and a colourful person in his own right. He spent 12 years in Kumaon Division as its Commissioner. He was of medium build, of robust constitution and generally indifferent to his dress. His technique of administration was to strike terror in the hearts of his subordinates. He had a loud voice and he used "damn, silly, hell", his choice epithets, whenever he got an opportunity. Behind the dour exterior, he was a kind man.

Mr Wyndham's capricious ways frightened most people. But the guiding principle of his life, however, was not to deprive anyone of his bread. During the 12 years I served under him, I did not see a single dismissal. Two naib tahsildars, found guilty of bribery and corruption, were reverted to the clerical line but not sacked. Another quality which particularly struck me, was his ability to know personally all his subordinates. He seemed to know every one's background. He saw through a man and whatever his subordinates did openly or clandestinely never escaped his notice. I know of no Englishman who was so thoroughly informed about the people he worked

with.

The Kumaon Commissionership in those days was a sinecure. There was light work and Mr Wyndham devoted all his spare time to hunting. He had his shikaris from his Mirzapur days. As a naib tahsildar, and later as a tahsildar, I had to arrange for young buffaloes, as bait for his tigers. Jim Corbett often accompanied him.

Mr Wyndham never accepted anything from his subordinates. He was honest to the backbone and a staunch opponent of *begar* and *bardaish* which were then in vogue. He raised his voice against this barbarous custom and established what were later known as coolie agencies in Naini Tal district. The full credit for the abolition of the system, however, goes to the Almora Congressmen headed by Pandit Badri Datta Pande, affectionately known as Lattha Pande. In a spectacular act of defiance, he threw all the coolie registers into the Sarju river at the Bageshwar fair in the year 1920.

Mr Wyndham was an astute politician and a perfect master of the divide-and-rule policy. He was the man responsible for creating the Brahmin-Rajput question in Kumaon. He separated the two communities in hostile camps with a careful weightage in jobs. Granted the Rajput was the underdog in the hills under the caste system which acknowledged the superiority of the Brahmin, yet the communities lived in remarkable amity, all sharing the common *hukka* (a great leveller). Mr Wyndham did not like this and set to work inciting the Rajputs against the so-called wrongs done by the Brahmins. Some Garhwal Brahmin officials at Pauri refused to share the *hukka* of a

Rajput and this was the small beginning of the question in the early decades of the century.

Thakur Jodh Singh Negi of village Sulla, Narendra Singh Rawat of village Ringwari and Ratan Singh Bisht of village Ophalda soon rose as leaders of the Garhwal Rajputs and started a paper to ventilate the grievances of the community. Some even stopped summoning Brahmins to the smaller religious ceremonies. A general hostility prevailed and Mr Wyndham's efforts widened the split. True, Mr Wyndham wanted recruits for the Army during World War I from among the Rajputs but he could have rewarded them in other ways. The way he split the two communities in the hills will never be forgotten.

Jim Corbett

Jim Corbett, now a famous man after his classic, *Man-eaters of Kumaon*, was a resident of Kaladhungi, a small Bhabar town 15 miles away from Naini Tal, where he farmed and did small business in winter when not otherwise gainfully occupied arranging tiger shoots for high-ups in the Government and their guests. Corbett was a constant companion of Mr Wyndham whenever he was out looking for tigers in the Bhabar and Tarai. A bachelor, he lived with his two sisters in a bungalow of his own. He had completely identified himself with the local population which affectionately called him "Carpet Saab". He always had a word of cheer for all those in trouble and was generous with his money. He was quite unlike the general run of the hoity-toity white man. I came in contact with Corbett at Kaladhungi where I was

posted as a naib tahsildar in the year 1920-21. He was of middle size and rather dark. One could see him going about in shorts, shirt, a thick coat of coarse material and a hat. He went about without a tie.

The tahsildars and naib tahsildars of Bhabar and Tarai often came in contact with him for the arrangement of porters and bullock carts for the big shoots. Corbett, of course, was in overall charge of every important shoot. His kindly nature and sympathetic attitude encouraged us to visit him.

Corbett also owned a bungalow at Naini Tal where he lived with his sisters from April to October. Whenever I visited him at Naini Tal, I found his house crowded, so popular was he. He led a simple unostentatious life. He liked the people of the hills. He would even share their food. During World War I, he raised a labour corps at Bhim Tal and went to France to take active part in the war. The Corbett National Park, named after him, will, however, perpetuate the memory of the famed hunter. He went to Kenya after independence and died there seven years later. It is a pity that he died in a foreign land away from the people he loved so much.

3. Porters and Sahibs

My work as naib tahsildar at Naini Tal was easy enough, but in summer, when the visitors started moving in, life was hell. There was no motor road from Kathgodam to Naini Tal then and the visitors to Naini Tal had to get down at the Brewery, three miles down the road. From there, the travellers either walked up or rode to town. All the baggage had to be carried by porters. The naib tahsildar used to receive 15 to 20 letters a day for porters. I had to be up early in the morning with three or four peons and the tahsil jamadar to see to it that porters were supplied on time. The hill slopes on both sides of the lake are dotted with bungalows and it took a long time checking the requisition list. Thus from April to September, I had to spend five to six hours a day supplying porters. Mr C.W. Grant, Deputy Commissioner, whom I met once on one of my rounds, asked me to pay particular attention to this work. He told me he would not like to hear any complaint.

After the morning round and a hurried meal, I would then go to the tahsil to my regular work. Hundreds of mutation cases were pending and in spite of hard work, there were huge arrears. Besides, I had to go through the police diaries of the patwaris and kanungos and forward them to the sub-divisional

magistrates in whose courts the cases would be tried. There was no regular police in the rural areas of the hills then and the patwari and kanungo had the powers of sub-inspector of police and inspector of police, respectively. The naib tahsildar was responsible for the police administration and had almost the same powers as a Deputy Superintendent of Police in the plains.

In fact there was little crime in the hills. Robbery was practically unknown and murders were few. The hillman is peaceful by nature. Hard struggle for a living takes most of his time and the climate and unsophisticated environment contribute to this. I had three Anglo-Indian Deputy Collectors as my sub-divisional magistrates: Messrs Nestor, Growse and Emile. All of them were Justices of Peace and were perhaps posted at Naini Tal in view of the large European population there. A J. P. could try a white man.

I was now sent to do the quinquennial settlement of the land on both sides of the Kosi river, the tract known as Kosiyan. This Kumaon river has an erratic course, with the result that fields are either washed away or added. For a period of five years, the recorded owner had to pay revenue for the land washed away, but not for the new land acquired from the river. I worked hard for several days, classified the soil, made a new assessment and submitted my report.

Thakur Sher Singh, a malguzar of the area, challenged my proposals and filed an application against me alleging that I had not been impartial to him. He was a very influential person and was the owner of the greater part of the land under settlement. The Deputy Commissioner, Mr Grant, forwarded the application

to Mr Emile, sub-divisional officer, for enquiry and report. Mr Emile made a local inspection and was considerably influenced by Thakur Sher Singh. He made a report that the settlement be done anew. After receiving the report, the Deputy Commissioner called me and read out to me the remarks of Mr Emile. I was astounded. I told the Deputy Commissioner that an I.C.S. officer might be deputed to make a local inspection and if he found my proposals incorrect, I may be dismissed from service. Mr W.C. Dible, I.C.S., had just been transferred to Naini Tal as a Joint Magistrate and the Deputy Commissioner sent all the relevant papers to him for enquiry and local inspection. He took the patwari and perhaps one amin with him and proceeded to the Kosi Valley. He went over all the classified land and the assessment I had made. He wrote in his report that the naib tahsildar's proposals were correct and that Mr Emile only saw the tract "through a telescope" from the public road nearby.

Mr Grant was an easy going man. He paid more attention to other pursuits than to his work, which he left to his subordinates. But he was kind. In the middle of the Naini Tal season, I got an attack of pneumonia and sent an application for medical leave. As soon as he got my application, he rang up Dr. Bala Datta Pande, who was in charge of the Crosthwaite Hospital, Naini Tal, to visit me twice a day and inform him of my condition.

A foe in the office

On the clerical side of the district administration, the office superintendent was a kingpin and almost

always notorious for graft. I soon had a row with one. Mr Gown, a native Christian, was the superintendent of the district office, Naini Tal. He used to go down to Haldwani every Saturday and return to Naini Tal on Monday morning for work. At his request, I used to send my horse to the Brewery to take him to Naini Tal. This went on for months. In the meantime, I disposed of my horse as its maintenance was rather heavy. Knowing too well that I had sold it, Mr Gown repeated his request. I hired a pony and sent it to the Brewery as usual. But there was some delay and he met the pony half way as he was walking up. He was annoyed. Next day, when I visited his office, he talked about the delay and the inconvenience caused to him. I told him as I had no pony now, I had to hire one for him. He said: "Do you know, the office superintendents can pull the ears of the naib tahsildars?" This was more than I could stomach. I retorted: "After all, you are an untouchable and though you have become a Christian, your habits are the same. If I were not in your office, I would have thrashed you and taught you a lesson."

Since that day, Mr Gown became my inveterate foe. On the flimsiest pretext, he would make a report against me and send my character roll to the Deputy Commissioner for an adverse entry. But I had a friend in Thakur Daulat Singh, a clerk in the English Office, who subsequently became secretary of the Naini Tal District Board. He always tipped me off whenever my character roll was sent up. This happened three or four times. Each time I went to the Deputy Commissioner and explained my position. The Deputy Commissioner finally told me that I should not worry and that

no harm would come to me on the reports of Mr Gown.

One never knew what demands would be made on the naib tahsildar and in what embarrassing situations he would land himself in. The motor car had now reached Naini Tal and a member of the Board of Revenue wrote to the Deputy Commissioner to arrange a garage for his car. The latter forwarded the letter to me. There was only one garage in the whole town and this belonged to Lala Krishna Sah, C.I.E., the richest man in Naini Tal. There was no time to make a request to the owner, so I broke open the lock of the garage and opened it for the visitor's car. The Lala's agent was furious. He rightly considered it a high-handed abuse of authority and went to his master to complain. I was no doubt guilty and went to Sahji in the evening to offer my apology. He seated me by his side, offered me *pan* and said that the garage was as much my property as his, that there was no question of apology and that he was glad that the garage had been of some use to me. That was old world courtesy to an employee of the Raj. I may here add that he was then worth more than a crore. He used his money unostentatiously. He chatted with all in a familiar manner and made everybody feel at ease. I once saw the Governor of U. P. reclining on the divan in his shop. The Nawab of Rampur was a close friend of his and often visited him in the shop which served as his sitting room as well. Lala Krishna Sah was perhaps the last of a great line of great businessmen of Kumaon division. His smile and hearty laughter are still imprinted in my memory.

Next in wealth to Lala Krishna Sah were Parma

and Shiv Lal Sahs. They both were brothers. They were contractors and businessmen and played an important part in the social life of Naini Tal. I often sought their help in the discharge of my arduous official duties and never got a "no" for an answer.

Police Work

Life, however, was not limited to the town arranging porters for the sahibs. One had to go out to attend to the call of duty. Word reached headquarters about the activities of dacoit Ishwar Singh, terror of the Kosi valley. He came in contact with criminals of the Bhabar and learnt many of their daring ways. He robbed travellers on the road, molested women and harassed the people. He was called the Sultana of the hills. Though many police cases had been registered against him, the patwaris and the kanungos could not arrest him. He used to go about armed with a khukri, the Gorkha knife. The officiating Deputy Commissioner, Mr Dible, called me and asked me to proceed to the Kosi valley to arrest him. Ishwar Singh would go into hiding in the forest whenever the police got near. With the kanungo of the area and two peons, I stayed near his village and watched his movements. An informer tipped us off one day that he was hiding in a particular place. We surrounded the place and asked him to surrender. As we all pinned him down, he aimed his khukri at my neck, but my peon, Badri Datta, saved me by pushing me aside. We handcuffed him and as he refused to walk with us back to Naini Tal, we put him on a horse.

I reported the arrest of Ishwar Singh to Mr Dible

in his court room. It was well past closing hour and Mr Dible sat relaxed against a fire going over some papers. He was pleased when I broke the news. His next question was whether I too believed in hard work. I said "yes". It was a cold day and seeing me shivering, he commented on my threadbare coat and wondered if I was adequately dressed. I said a naib tahsildar could not buy an overcoat on the salary he got. He was putting on one.

A fixed sum of money was set apart for rewarding the staff who did good police work. Ordinarily, the naib tahsildar was considered a high-up for the reward. At least there was no precedent. Mr Dible put Rs. 50 against my name and smaller amounts against the names of the patwari and the kanungo for the clean job done. The revenue assistant sent back the papers saying that there was no precedent for such a reward being given to a naib tahsildar. He overruled the objection and ordered that the naib tahsildar be paid Rs 50. With the money, I ordered my first woollen shirt. One day, on my way to the district office, I met Mr Dible on the road and thanked him for the reward. I showed him my new shirt. He smiled and jocularly said it almost looked as warm as an overcoat.

Pandit Chatura Datta Joshi was my tahsildar then. He was very competent and very upright. But he was too independent and avoided seeing the high-ups. When I joined him, he instructed me not to accept presents. He then told me that it would be a good thing for my career if I saw Mr Wyndham, the Commissioner, at least three or four times a year. I said I was afraid of him. He offered to accompany

me and both of us one day landed at the Commissioner's bungalow. We settled down. Mr Wyndham came out and told us if we had no particular business, both of us were wasting his time. We were crestfallen. Pandit Chatura Datta informed me later that one should not mind Mr Wyndham's coarse exterior. Deep down, he did like seeing people who worked for him.

Pandit Chatura Datta was appointed Deputy Collector and was succeeded by Pandit Kailash Chandra Trivedi. Pandit Kailash Chandra was formerly a sub-inspector of police and Mr Wyndham had his services transferred to the Revenue Department. Pandit Kailash Chandra became very popular at Naini Tal both among the local gentry and the European population. Pandit Chatura Datta had never done the "dirty work" of supplying porters and doing odd jobs for the local Europeans. On the other hand, Pandit Kailash Chandra liked it because it brought him in close contact with the whites. Because of Mr Kailash Chandra, my burden was lightened. Once when Mr. Wyndham wanted me to go with the Governor to make arrangements for his tour, Pandit Kailash Chandra volunteered to go himself. He was well known for his hospitality and fine manners.

The Hermit of Padambori

While on tour, one could relax. Whenever in the neighbourhood, I took the opportunity to see a hermit to whom I was mightily drawn. Baba Sombar Giri for years lived at Kakrighat, near Khairna, in a cave and then shifted to Padambori, some four miles away from Bhim Tal, again to a cave by a

rivulet. He was tall and thin. He rubbed ash over his body and only used a loin cloth to cover it. Every Monday he held a *bhandara*. This is giving food to all who came. Hundreds of people flocked to his cave with presents of flour, rice, milk, ghee, curds and vegetables. He treated all who came to tea and refreshments and listened to their tales of woe. For the ailing, he would suggest medicine and give advice to others. Throughout the day, he received visitors but after nightfall he would enter his cave and permit none to see him. He was a great yogi and even knew beforehand who was calling on him with what request. He could discern a man's past and future and his predictions always came out correct.

On one of these visits, that was after I had appeared at the B. A. examination, I asked the Baba what would the result be like. "How can you expect good result without study?" he asked. "But do not worry, you will get the same benefits which you would have got with the degree". His prophecy came true. I failed, yet I became a Deputy Collector in course of time.

Another time, while I was camping at Peura, nearby, the chaukidar of the dak bungalow, Moti Singh, invited a good many people to a feast to celebrate the birth of a grandson. He also asked me to come. I did so and at the time of my departure, he put the customary red vermilion mark on my forehead and presented me with Rs 2. As a Brahmin, I was entitled to a *dakshina*. I was willing to accept one rupee only, but the chaukidar told me it would be inauspicious to return what had been presented. I was to visit the Baba later in the day. With the Rs 2 which Moti Singh had given me

and with my own Rs 2 I now bought some dry fruits for the Baba. As I greeted the Baba and laid the cloth bundle at his feet, he said jocularly: "Haram ka mal tum khud khate ho aur mujh ko bhi late ho". I was astounded. How could he know! I explained Rs 2 was Moti Singh's and Rs 2 mine. He laughed it off and added neither he nor I were destined to enjoy them. He was responsible for hundreds of miracles, big and small. He cured a leper and asked him to open a shop by the roadside for the benefit of the numerous visitors who called on him and instructed him to charge only one paisa a rupee as profit. He cured many of tuberculosis with simple remedies.

A Harijan of Bhim Tal had murdered a kumhar (muleteer) who had more than Rs 100 in his girdle. It happened a few miles below Padambori and the kanungo, who was investigating the case, found it convenient to stay with the Baba. Two days later, the Baba summoned him and jocularly told him that he could not feed lazy a man any more. He asked him to search the Chami ravine for the killer. There they found the murderer sitting on a boulder with the girdle containing the money and a blood-stained axe.

The Baba used to smoke *sulfa*, a product of the hemp plant. Though its preparation is forbidden under the law, villagers still prepare it for their own use as well as for the use of wandering hermits. Though an illegal act, I used to procure it for the Baba myself. The moment he saw me, he would ask me to take out the "thing from my pocket." A patwari, who was a devotee of the Baba, was fined Rs 10 by the Deputy Commissioner on the recommendation of the tahsil-

dar for failing to make satisfactory arrangements for a touring forest officer. The Baba asked me if I could help the poor patwari. I expressed my inability. The Baba then directed the patwari to appeal to the Commissioner. The Commissioner did not find the patwari at fault and refunded the fine.

So many instances of his miraculous powers came to my notice that it is not possible for me to recount them all. But I would like to describe two personal experiences of mine. During one visit, the Baba asked me what I would like to eat. Off hand, I told him that I would like some first-class *suji-ka-halwa*. "How can you expect this from a fakir?" he jeered. Then I said I would eat whatever was offered. To my great surprise, within ten minutes, I was sent a *thal* of *halwa*. I enjoyed it. A thought passed briefly how lucky the Baba was to be eating such delicious food. He could read my mind. While I was saying good-bye, he took out a ball of dough out of the fire and said that I was fated to enjoy the *halwa* and he only the ball baked in the ashes. I felt ashamed and asked for his pardon. Uncannily, during my last visit, the Baba knew that I would be transferred though I had no such apprehension. He took two potatoes out of the ashes and asked me to go down to the river and eat them. He repeated several times that I alone should eat them. They were not to be given to anyone. I had hardly eaten one, when a man came to me with hands stretched out that saying he had been starving for three days. I forgot the Baba's warning and gave the other potato to the man. When I returned to the Baba he knew what had happened. He was furious and called me an unfortunate wretch.

He said he had given me something precious and that I was not destined to have it. I often wonder what I missed in life by losing that potato.

Lala Radhe Shyam of Kashipur, a friend lost Rs 100 while on a visit to the Baba. It was stolen from his coat while he was bathing in the river. A wandering fakir took it and went away. The theft was detected two hours later. The Baba dared me as a naib tahsildar to help recover the money. I was at my wit's end. It would be improper for me to search respectable people sitting there. I kept quiet. In the evening, the Baba told me : "Govind, a fakir, who was here in the morning, had taken the money. He is on the way to Kathgodam. He has spent Rs 5 and will come back with the remaining Rs 95." In the evening, [the fakir was there with the money. As he felt very penitent, the Baba dismissed him without saying anything. He did not want to hurt his feelings. Sombar Giri, as far as I know, had a Muslim guru whom he met on the bank of the Satlaj in the Punjab. Another equally powerful sadhu of the area was the Baba of Hairakhan. Sombar Giri thought highly of him. I met this Baba only once. He too was widely known for his occult powers.

A sub-divisional officer I well remember was Mr Emile. For an Anglo-Indian, he was an Indophile. He used to read the *Ramayana* every day and thought it the best religious work in the world. He firmly believed women should be kept under control at every stage of life as enjoined by the *Ramayana*. Sita and Savitri were his ideals. Next to the *Ramayana*, he considered Tulsi-das's *Vinay Patrika* a magnificent collection of aphorisms. He had even started translating it into English

but his death cut short the project.

Mr Emile was succeeded by Pandit Guru Sewak Singh Upadhyaya. In the early days of Allahabad University, the student who topped in the B. A. examination was appointed deputy collector direct if he fulfilled other conditions. Pandit Guru Sewak Singh was the first such deputy collector. As he took over, he was asked to inspect the tahsil. The mutation work was in heavy arrears as the naib tahsildar's time was taken by odd jobs. The miscellaneous duties of looking after the Europeans took the most of his time. White men and women would call on him with such silly requests as for a servant or a cook. There would be complaints of adulterated milk. I explained this all to Mr. Upadhyaya. He sympathised with me but added that I could not afford to neglect the work for which I was paid. His inspection note reflected discredit on me, but the concluding portion of the inspection note said that the naib tahsildar seemed to be an intelligent man and would be able to dispose of the arrears within a reasonable time.

Mr Upadhyaya was a remarkable person. I never met a deputy collector in my 30 years' service as fearless as he. During the World War I, he would often comment that he was like Bhishma Pitamaha of the *Mahabharata*, who fought on the side of the Kauravas but desired the victory of the Pandavas. Patriotism was his religion. He led a simple, austere life. He took leave to become the headmaster of the Central Hindu Collegiate School at Benaras perhaps on a request from Pandit Madan Mohan Malaviya, but had to return to the job as he could not pull on with the

Theosophists who ran the school.

Lady Meston's Visit

The Governor's wife, Lady Meston, was to visit Bhowali. Mr. Wyndham asked me to proceed there to make arrangements for her stay. Mr Wyndham also reached there a day before she did to check on these. The next morning, he called me and ordered a big breakfast for himself from Mrs Cotton's hotel: four boiled eggs and a loaf of bread. I reminded him that he was to lunch with Lady Meston that day. He told me I did not know the ways of civilised society. He would on a full belly behave at the table exactly the way the people of Lucknow did. I laughed and he too joined in the laughter.

Bhowali is a cold place. The armed guards accompanying Lady Meston asked me to provide them with six maunds of firewood to keep them warm at night. Their request was reasonable and the firewood was provided. I did not ask the Commissioner's permission for this. Next day, when I submitted the bills, the Commissioner objected to the firewood. As was his wont, he started shouting at me and said that I should myself pay Rs 2/4, the cost of the fuel. I said I would not pay it as the firewood was supplied to the guards who were there to look after the security of the visitor. As we argued, the head constable stepped forward and told the Commissioner that he was ready to pay the amount and the naib tahsildar need not be punished for his kindness to them. I asked him not to pay the amount. The Commissioner laughed and the head constable and I also laughed. Mr Wyndham loved a

row. But he never let his subordinates suffer a loss, however small, and I knew it.

After two years' service as naib tahsildar, the Deputy Commissioner, Mr Grant, wanted to nominate me for tahsildarship. But my friend, Mr Gown, the clerk, who pursued me with the vindictiveness of a serpent, showed him some rules which discouraged him. After three years' service, however, Mr Grant sent up my nomination papers to the Commissioner who shelved them. Mr Wyndham did not like Brahmins. The Commissioner of Kumaon was competent to nominate people for tahsildarship and the Board of Revenue had to accept his decision. I had also been superseded in my grade promotion twice.

Financial Troubles

Life at Naini Tal was rather expensive and I experienced great difficulty in making the two ends meet. Almost all the respectable people from Garhwal, gazetted Government servants, title-holders and the gentry, who visited Naini Tal during the summer to meet the Commissioner, the Governor and other dignitaries, used to stay with me. Their entertainment added to my expenses. The people then were not hotel-minded. I used to get my provisions on credit from a shopkeeper in Talli Tal and I paid him at the end of the month. For several months, I could not pay him and when I got my orders for transfer to Bazpur, I found to my horror that I owed the shopkeeper Rs. 900. He demanded his money but I expressed my inability to settle the accounts then. But I assured him that I would pay him to the last paisa the day my means

improved. He was satisfied and to show the trust he had in me, he destroyed all the credit slips in my presence and asked me not to worry. My worry, however, continued till I had paid him in full after my appointment as officiating tahsildar at Kashipur. His behaviour created a profound impression on my mind. After I had paid him, I invited him home to dinner and presented him with cloth for a suit and a silk turban in token of my gratitude.

4. Tarai With Mr Wyndham

The naib tahsildar at Bazpur had been reverted to the clerical line on the strength of some serious charges. The Commissioner, therefore, had an opportunity to transfer me to Bazpur. Thakur Durga Singh Rawat took over from me at Naini Tal.

Bazpur then was a godforsaken place, an island in elephant grass. The cultivated area was small and the villages were dotted over the plain miles away from one another. The northern half of the tahsil was inhabited by the Boxas, a tribe. They were more interested in fishing and hunting than in agriculture. The tahsil was populated by Muslims, Hindus and some Banjaras. The jungle part of the tahsil was infested with tigers and served as a happy hunting ground for Mr Wyndham and his friends. Mr Wyndham did not like others shooting in the Tarai and the forest officer-in-charge of the Tarai and Bhabar, who was a subordinate of his, rarely issued tiger permits to others. Tarai and Bhabar were a *Kham* estate and the Commissioner of Kumaon division was sort of a proprietor of it. The naib tahsildar serving in the Tarai and Bhabar was called a *sarbarakar* and the two tahsildars, one for the Tarai and the other for Bhabar, were called assistant managers.

To avoid double expenditure, Mr Wyndham

designated the Executive Engineer of the Tarai and Bhabar as Kham Superintendent. The revenue staff of the tract was under him. For a few months, we had Mr B. D. O. Darley as our Kham Superintendent. He treated us well. In the annual administration report of the Bhabar and Tarai, he mentioned that though I had joined late in the year, I had already established a reputation for honesty. A promotion took him away from the Tarai and a few years later he was knighted. Mr F. Anderson, another executive engineer, succeeded him and held that post for a number of years.

There were only four or five brick buildings at Bazpur consisting of the tahsil, thana and quarters for the staff. It did not have a single shop and we had to buy things on the weekly market day. The market site was auctioned and the man who got it, collected the *tahbazari* (ground tax) from all the shopkeepers for the day.

Mr Wyndham dropped in on his winter tour and visited the tahsil. He scribbled a few lines under each head in the inspection book and finished it in just 20 minutes to my great relief. I was new to the tahsil and would not have been able to acquit myself well.

The inspection over, Mr Wyndham asked me about the *Kham* shops project nearing completion at Bazpur. Before I could reply, the naib nazir, who was also there, began to speak. Mr Wyndham flared up saying he was not talking to him. He then went out to meet a delegation of Boxas. He talked to them as if they were his kith and kin. He made detailed enquiries about the crops, their health, food and hunting. Taking this opportunity, I slipped away to the rear of

the tahsil building to light a cigarette. I had scarcely had a puff, when I saw Mr Wyndham approaching me. I threw away the cigarette rather sheepishly. "I have forgotten to bring my cigarettes, will you give me one?" he asked. It was a packet of the cheapest brand. I showed him the packet to discourage him, but he took it saying that on the whole it had no bad taste. I wonder if it was to assure me that my slipping away had given him no offence.

A Brahmin and a Turban

Mr Wyndham next came to hunt tigers. Mr Har Swarup, sub-inspector of police, and I went to the dak bungalow to pay our respects. He was already upon an elephant and was starting for the jungle. When he saw us, he got furious. He got down the howdah saying he had seen the face of a Brahmin and the red turban of a policeman – he considered both inauspicious – and cancelled his outing for the day. He showered a heap of abuse on both of us. It went on for half an hour. "Damn, silly, hell" were always on his tongue. We were familiar with it all but that day he added "devil and incarnation of Satan" to his tirade.

I was so depressed with the insult that I could not eat that night. It was one of the darkest and longest nights in my service and I could not sleep. I resolved that I must resign and never see Mr Wyndham, whatever the consequences. I wrote a letter the next day to Pandit Narayan Datta Chemwal, a big forest contractor of Dhikuli, in Ramnagar tahsil, to provide me with a job in his timber business. He offered me Rs 150 a month to supervise work in a certain area. Pandit

Narayan Datta casually informed Mr Anderson, my boss, about my decision to quit. Mr B. D. O. Darley, Mr Anderson's predecessor, had praised me to Mr Anderson. Mr Anderson, on a subsequent visit to Bazpur, dissuaded me from quitting.

Mr Wyndham was now in the jungle. I ignored him, just sent his dak, made arrangements for the supply of young buffaloes to serve as tiger bait and looked after his needs. He did not like it. One day, while he was camping at Barení, about eight miles from Bazpur, I had to escort Mr C. A. Mumford, the new Deputy Commissioner, to his camp. Just outside the camp, I sought his permission to go back to Bazpur to make arrangements for his dak as well as for that of the Commissioner. He said "yes" and I returned to Bazpur without meeting Mr Wyndham.

The Commissioner, however, knew that I had been so close to the camp. He asked Haq Dad Khan, a jamadar who was in the camp to look after him, if I had come. Haq Dad Khan replied in the negative. Thereupon, Mr Wyndham told him: "What sort of a jamadar are you? If you do not know the movements of your *naib tahsildar*, how can you make satisfactory arrangements for my tour?"

While Mr Wyndham was at Gularbhoj, Mr Mumford, who succeeded Mr Grant, came to inspect my *tahsil*. He made a detailed inspection. Having finished the day's work, when he rose to go, he asked me if I had anything to say. I took out my letter of resignation from my pocket and handed it over to him. He was no doubt very surprised. He asked me if I belonged to a rich family. I replied in the negative and added

that I would not have come to serve in the Tarai if I had even the ordinary means to support me. He pointed out that in the plains even a taluqdar's son did not get such a job easily. I said they wanted a job for respect and honour, while I was doing a job to earn a living. Then he asked me what I would do if my resignation was accepted. I said I was a trained teacher and would join the Education Department again. He asked me why I had been superseded in my grade promotion. I said my only fault was that I was a Brahmin and Mr Wyndham did not encourage a Brahmin.

The next day he left for Gadarpur to visit the tahsil there and I accompanied him as far as the limit of my tahsil to see him off. As I had no pony of my own, I borrowed one for the day. This pony was very high spirited and I an indifferent rider. Mr Mumford began to trot his pony. My mare got excited and started galloping. I did my best to control it but to no purpose. Mr Mumford understood my plight and shouted from behind that I give her free rein. Now the Deputy Commissioner was following the naib tahsildar. We ran into a herd of spotted deer and his pony got wild. Mr Mumford jumped off the horse. Now something had to be done. Soon my mare calmed down. I got down, tied her to a tussock of grass and went after Mr Mumford's pony and caught it. Now started pleasantries. Mr Mumford wanted me to ride first for my mare was rather wild. He wanted to see me seated before he mounted. At the border of the tahsil we parted. As we did so, Mr Mumford tore my resignation letter and asked me not to resign till I

heard from him. After two days at Gadarpur, Mr Mumford joined the Commissioner at Gularbhoj.

Night March

A week later, one evening, I received a chit from the Commissioner asking me to meet him at Gularbhoj the next morning. The last train to Gularbhoj had left and the only course left for me was to go by road. This passed through dense forest infested with tigers and elephants. It was now night. I consulted my staff and Haq Dad Khan, the wise old man. All of them said I must go and Haq Dad Khan offered to accompany me. He collected some 12 young men and we started on foot with 12 lanterns. We covered the distance of 10 miles and reached Gularbhoj at 3 a. m. completely exhausted. I woke up the Commissioner's reader, borrowed his camp cot and slept after paying my companions the train fare to Bazpur. The Commissioner had asked me to bring the inspection book of the tahsil. When I was ushered in the next morning, I handed over to him the inspection book. Mr Wyndham threw the book away. "Now you have become a Lat Sahib and will not come to see me!" he said. I got angry too and told him that if I were a Lat Sahib I would not be serving a man who deprived his subordinates of a night's rest. The Commissioner told me that he would set me right if I did not mend my ways. Then he asked me to pick up the inspection book. He opened it at random and read in an inspection note by Mr Anderson that there were 25,000 head of cattle in my tahsil. He asked me what was the number of cattle in my tahsil. I replied

it was in the neighbourhood of 30,000. He said my figure was wrong as Mr Anderson had estimated it at 25,000. The inspection, I said, was made six months ago and in the meantime there had been some additions. Then he broke the news that I was to officiate as a tahsildar at Kashipur for two years in place of Babu Bhawani Sahai. He said it was the busiest tahsil of Kumaon division, that I should be able to cope with the work and be rigidly impartial to the Hindus and Muslims. The last warning was if I neglected the cattle farm, he would send me back to the Education Department. I was asked to see Mr Mumford, who submitted my nomination papers for tahsildarship to the Commissioner with a strong recommendation. The Commissioner had wanted to send Mr Frank Rawat, a man junior to me, to Kashipur but Mr Mumford had convinced Mr Wyndham that it would not be fair. Besides, he thought I would do better there. When I left, Mr Mumford wrote a letter to Mr Abu Abdullah Mohammad Zakaulla Khan, S. D. O., Kashipur, to treat me well and look after my health and work.

Mr Wyndham generally treated his underlings with contempt. He did not mind using his rich low vocabulary on them even in public. This tended to lower them in public estimation in general. But at times, when he wanted it, he could be very clever. There was the amusing incident with the station master of Bazpur who had delayed sending a telegram to the Governor inviting him for bird shooting. On the way to the railway station, he asked me to accompany him. He asked me what I thought of the station

master. I said he was a good man. He then told me that he would take him to task for delaying the telegram and when he had used enough bad language, I should intercede and ask him to pardon the station master.

The station master was summoned and after being called names, was asked why he had not sent the telegram to the Governor at once. "I will get you dismissed," he shouted. After he had showered more abuses, I stepped out and requested him to pardon the station master. Then he addressed the station master: "If the naib tahsildar had not requested me to pardon you, I would have secured your dismissal. You should thank the naib tahsildar for his intercession." Since that day the station master as well as the people had the impression that I could influence the Commissioner. My stock went high.

The Elephant Ride

At last the Governor came for the shoot. The Governor had a Christian steno, named Mr Bob, who expressed a desire to the Commissioner that he be allowed to join the hunt. The Commissioner said he was a babu and could not be allowed. Failing here, he approached the Governor, Sir Harcourt Butler. The next day, he appeared with him on the howdah. Mr Wyndham turned scarlet, but he controlled himself. When the hunting party returned, he took me aside and told me that he did not like the Governor's steno joining the party. I said he must have taken his boss's permission.

On the last day of the hunt, I was, as usual,

standing out looking after the arrangements when the Governor asked his private secretary to call me. I was now asked to accompany them on the same elephant. I had to obey but I knew Mr Wyndham would not like it. When the party returned after the day's bag of waterfowl, Mr Wyndham, as expected, questioned me as to who had asked me to join the hunters. I said it was the Governor himself and that it would have been most discourteous if I had declined the offer. But Mr Wyndham kept it up. He said the Governor's babu had not done a good thing and I had followed suit. He also insinuated that I wanted to show off to the people how important I was by occupying the same howdah as the Governor. I told him that I also as a naib tahsildar had an elephant for my own use during the rains and it was not unusual for them seeing the Kham Superintendent, Mr Anderson, and me on the same elephant. I reminded him that once I had been on the same elephant with him and the question of importance did not arise. Mr Wyndham kept grumbling. There was no doubt he was annoyed.

Fair Return

Mr Wyndham was at times queer in his ways. A Boxa pradhan, named Moti, called on me on the last day of Durga Puja and brought me four seers of basmati rice. He said he did not like to visit people empty handed on an auspicious day. I knew he was a friend of Mr Wyndham and declined the offer. With every "no", his insistence increased and ultimately I had to accept the rice. I had sweets made that day for distribution to my staff and gave some to Moti. He

refused to take them but on my insistence, he had to yield. Shortly after, Mr Wyndham passed through the village and made enquiries about the tahsil staff. Moti told him that he had taken a small quantity of rice to me on the last day of Durga Puja and that I had given him about two seers of sweets. The Commissioner informed him that as the price of the sweets was more than that of the rice, he should give me an equal quantity of rice to compensate me for the loss. Three or four days later, Moti brought me as much rice and narrated the story. This rice I had to accept as well.

First Rumblings

It was now 1918. The World War I had ended with the victory of the Allies and the people expected substantial reforms in the administration. There was general frustration when nothing came. The Jallianwala Bagh massacre fanned the sparks of discontent into a blaze and sowed the seeds of the non-cooperation movement. The rumblings could be heard even in the Tarai. The town of Kashipur became the nerve centre of the movement and the people of Bazpur, who visited Kashipur, brought news of the goings-on there.

The general mood gripped us and the naib tahsildars and tahsildars working in the Tarai made a representation to the Commissioner for a Tarai-Bhabar allowance to meet the extra cost of mosquito nets, medicines and tonics. Mr Wyndham considered our request reasonable and suggested that we might in the meantime show ourselves on tour for three days in the week and earn a travelling allowance of Rs 9 a month. All of us

declined to do this for a mere Rs 9 a month and pressed our demand. Mr Wyndham made a very strong case to the Government. Within two months of our representation, we received the news that a naib tahsildar and tahsildar would get an allowance of Rs 40 and Rs 75, respectively, in the Tarai and Rs 30 and Rs 50 in the Bhabar.

5. *Kashipur Days*

I was transferred to Kashipur, the biggest tahsil then in Kumaon division. The Agra Tenancy Act was in force there unlike in other tahsils of the division. There was no naib tahsildar to assist me. The load of work was heavy. Besides the routine work, there was Mr Wyndham's pet project to be looked after. It was a cattle farm on the railway line between Kashipur and Ramnagar, some six miles away. I visited it every Sunday and on holidays. We had five or six cowherds, a superintendent and some four or five big thatched shelters to keep the cattle at night. For miles and miles there was an open grazing-land. The veterinary surgeon of Kashipur branded them to distinguish them from other cattle. Every year, there was an auction of bullocks and even the people from the neighbouring districts of Moradabad and Rampur came to bid for them. A good pair of bullocks fetched as much as Rs 500. The auction was the only source of income to the farm. I think we were not running the cattle farm at a loss, though there was no appreciable income either. The farm was situated in an internal place, highly malarious, and the health of the employees was a matter of constant anxiety to me. Medicines had to be provided for them and no superintendent would stay there for more than three months. His pay was only Rs 40 and it was a

problem to find a new superintendent every three months. Sometimes, I sent there a literate peon of the tahsil to act as superintendent till I found a right man.

During the first year of my stay at Kashipur, Mr Wyndham camped near the cattle farm and sent word to me to meet him there. I used to send him his daily dak and his loaf of bread which came from Naini Tal. One day, because of the carelessness of the peon, the bread was taken away by a dog. When the fact was discovered, I was worried and wrote to Mr Stean, a railway engineer, to send me a loaf of bread. He did it at once and I informed the Commissioner, as the bread received from Naini Tal had been eaten by a dog, I was sending him another. I forgot to mention that I had taken it from Mr Stean. After reading my letter, he gave the bread to Mr Abraham Benson, his court clerk and steno. When I reached there, he asked me from where I got the bread. I said Mr Stean was kind enough to send it. I showed him his letter. Mr Benson was there and Mr Wyndham immediately asked him to return the loaf. Mr Benson in his presence said to me: "Tahsildar Saheb, I never asked the old man for the loaf. It was good I did not eat it. I shall return it to him in the same condition I received it."

It was branding time at the farm. Unfortunately, crows started pecking at the wounds and many started bleeding. Mr Wyndham noticed this [and was furious: "This veterinary surgeon is incapable and deserves punishment for the bad work he has done. You should have broken his head] with a bamboo pole." I told him the veterinary surgeon had done the work well

and perhaps it was our job to keep the crows away. "What do you know of veterinary science?" fumed Mr Wyndham. "You are praising this fool of a doctor for nothing."

He now asked me to produce the inspection book. Perhaps realising that he had been excessively harsh to us, he softened his tone and offered me a seat on his elephant. I had come from Kashipur in a bullock-tonga. He remarked that the tonga looked excellent. I told him a tahsildar is somebody in the eyes of the people, howsoever contemptuously his superior officer might treat him. I thanked him for the offer, adding I could not leave the veterinary surgeon behind. "How can an animal doctor sit with me on the same elephant?" I was used to this sort of behaviour, but the veterinary surgeon was disconsolate. He feared there would be a report against him but I assured him Mr Wyndham never did it.

There was kindness from the new Deputy Commissioner, Mr Mumford. After an inspection of the tahsil, he said he was pleased with my work. This he also wrote in the inspection note. My health was none too good. Hard work and frequent attacks of malaria had sapped my vitality and I looked pale. While leaving, he told me: "Why do you work so hard? Do you think this dishonest Government will support your wife and children if you die? I do not want you to work more than six hours a day. All Sundays and holidays of yours are taken up by the cattle farm. This should stop." Next day at the cattle farm, the Deputy Commissioner asked for the inspection book. I told him it had been taken away by the Commissioner. I

brought to his notice the branding episode over which I had no control.

The Deputy Commissioner made a detailed inspection, checked the account books, saw the cattle, the night shelters and met the miserable cowherds who were walking skeletons on account of the extremely bad climate. He also made a note of the number of days the veterinary doctor and I had spent on the farm. Concluding his remarks, he wrote: "Mr Kala is to be congratulated on the excellent management of the cattle farm and I record my appreciation of his good work." I sent the typed inspection note to the Commissioner through a peon to a place six miles away from Ramnagar where he was camping. But before the inspection note could reach him, he had sent back the inspection book, commenting most favourably on my cattle farm work. On his return journey to Haldwani, he asked me to see him at the Kashipur railway station. At our meeting, he said: "*Tum chaprasi kahe bari bheji? Ham bhonki par kati nahin.* (Why did you send the chaprasi? I bark, but do not bite.)" It was amusing to hear him talking the eastern dialect so fluently. This he had acquired in his Mirzapur days.

The Non-Cooperation Movement

Like Almora, Kashipur took an active part in the non-cooperation movement (as we quaintly described it then) in the Kumaon division. Though there was no boycott of the educational institutions and law courts, fiery speeches were made in the town by various speakers under the leadership of Pandit

Govind Ballabh Pant. Sometimes, leaders came from Moradabad and Bareilly and the sub-divisional magistrate, Mr Zakaullah Khan, promulgated prohibitory orders under Section 144, Cr. P. C. At times, the meetings were held at dead of night and we had to hurry with the prohibitory orders. Pandit Govind Ballabh Pant had his lieutenant in Pandit Ram Datta Pant, affectionately known as Guru in the town. Guru was very sincere, upright, courteous and obliging. He was the soul of the movement and his remarkable influence gradually brought under the Congress banner many people. Pandit Pant practised as a lawyer both at Naini Tal and Kashipur. He was a member of the Kashipur Municipal Board and so was I. We often had discussions at the board meetings and I considered him self-opinionated. I now think it was a positive quality for leadership. He seemed to be making little headway in the legal profession. We all respected his vast knowledge though on matters relating to Kumaon division.

Even while the non-cooperation movement was in full swing, Mr Wyndham sent an invitation to Sir John Hewit, former Lt-Governor of U. P., to visit Kashipur on a tiger shoot. Mr Wyndham had advanced me money to pay the coolies (porters is a new word) engaged in cleaning the *parao* (camp site) where Sir John was to stay. I had engaged some *chamars* of Barkhera Pande for this at annas 6 a day. In a speech, which Pandit Pant made in the town the next day, he stated that the tahsildar had been taking *begar* (free forced labour) and had forced the *chamars* of Barkhera Pande to clear a *parao* with-

out payment. The police duly sent a copy of the speech to the Deputy Commissioner at Naini Tal. Mr Mumford reached Kashipur the next day in the evening and called me to the dak bungalow. He was very angry and told me it could bring about my dismissal. I was annoyed. I told the Deputy Commissioner that either the speech was misinterpreted or it was a lie. He showed me a copy of the speech. I told Mr Mumford that I had no knowledge of the speech, that both my peon and I would wait at the dak bungalow and he could visit the shop of the chaudhari to whom I had advanced the money to be paid to the coolies. Mr Mumford immediately went there. In the meantime, the coolies had returned from work and were with the chaudhari receiving their wages for the day. Mr Mumford made enquiries and also checked the accounts maintained by the chaudhari. He returned to the dak bungalow equally annoyed. Pandit Pant was duly summoned by Mr Mumford. In my presence, he told him that he had damaged the reputation of an innocent man and that he should go to my house and apologise. Pandit Pant did express his regrets.

Pandit Pant had a good library. I used to borrow books from him. I well remember to have read a book, *Lost Dominion*, in which it was written clearly that the Pandits like Mahamana Malaviya would lay an axe at the root of the British Empire in India. How prophetic!

All Christmas holidays meant tigers to Mr Wyndham and big shoots at Maldhan, some six miles

away from Kashipur. All his friends were welcome. The then Inspector-General of Police of U.P. was one of them. While his baggage was passing through the town in a bullock cart, some non-cooperators unyoked the bullocks and drove them away. The news shocked Mr Wyndham. I was called and informed of what had happened. I told him, I could not help him in view of his proclamation against *begar* and *bardaish*. He said: "*Gussa na kari, saman chalai. Aur kitna hi paisa lagi, ham dei.* (Do not be angry. Let the luggage move. I will pay you whatever the extra cost)." I tried my best to find a bullock cart but could not succeed. As night fell, I went to Chaube Amar Nath, a zamindar, and requested him to place one of his bullock carts at my disposal. He was a friend of Pandit Pant and a staunch non-cooperator at heart. With great difficulty, I persuaded him to lend it to me. I got the luggage into it and the cart was sent to Maldhan by a circuitous route to avoid trouble. Chaube Amar Nath would not accept money for the use of his cart. When the bullock cart was beyond the reach of the non-cooperators, I informed Mr Wyndham that the thing had been done.

Requisitioned Carts

After the Maldhan hunt, Mr Wyndham decided again to go in for some of the big tigers not bagged. I employed some camels for his luggage apart from the departmental elephants. But the camel men did not bring ropes to tie up the luggage. It was difficult to get ropes in the forest immediately. The mahawats,

however, produced one thick one which was unwound and remade into several ropes for the use of the cameleers. Part of the baggage was also sent by bullock cart. To my horror, I found about eight bags of gram, procured for Mr Wyndham's horses, had been left behind. There was no village near enough where I could hire two bullock carts. I saw two bullock carts passing that way to the forest to fetch grass. I offered to pay the cartmen the usual hire to carry the bags. The cartmen were most unwilling. I, therefore, seized the carts, put four bags on each and sent them with a peon of the tahsil to the camp. As expected, the cartmen promptly went to Mr Wyndham and reported to him that their carts had been seized in *begar* by the tahsildar. I was summoned. Mr Wyndham pointed out he had raised his voice against this pernicious system. His anger knew no bounds. He went on haranguing me for about 15 minutes and asked Abraham Benson, his camp clerk, to draft an order for my dismissal. The lecture was in the eastern dialect and the cartmen well guessed its content. Both of them now fell at his feet and begged him to pardon me. They also said they would not have come to report if they had realised how grave things would be. They also offered not to accept any hire. Now, addressing the cartmen, he asked them if they had land in Kashipur tahsil. On their replying in the affirmative, he again asked them if they had anything to do with the tahsildar. They replied they always went to the tahsildar's court whenever the zamindar showed his highhandedness and the for-

mer always helped them. "If that is a fact, why did you come to me to make a report?" They again fell at his feet and the matter was dismissed. The dismissal order also never saw the light of day. I wonder, if it was all showmanship.

The next evening, Mr Wyndham sent me a bird he had shot in the forest with a card: "With compliments from Wyndham." I was a vegetarian and gave the bird to my Muslim peon who had brought it. Later, when Mr Wyndham returned to Kashipur, he asked me if I had liked the bird. I told him what happened. He said I should have returned it to him if I was a vegetarian.

Train Stopped

Another day, he asked me if I could somehow get the train running between Kashipur and Ramnagar stopped for five minutes near the cattle farm, where he wanted to fix his camp. I was in a fix and told him that though time, tide and trains waited for none, I would try and inform him by the evening if anything could be done. I went to the station master. He agreed to two minutes only. I informed Mr Wyndham. He said he would be satisfied with the short halt. As soon as the train stopped, Mr Wyndham called the guard and started making detailed enquiries about his pay, qualifications and length of service. He engaged him in conversation for full five minutes. It was all he needed to take out the luggage and the camp equipment. He thanked the guard and proceeded to the camp.

This station master had a son who had just done

his matriculation. He learnt that there was a vacancy for a clerk in the court of the Sessions Judge at Pilibhit and sought my assistance. He asked me to speak to the Commissioner and obtain a letter of recommendation for the Sessions Judge. The station master's kindness was still fresh in my memory and I certainly wanted to oblige him, but the man I had to deal with was unpredictable. The Commissioner had come to the railway station to see off a friend of his. I took courage and spoke to him about the station master's son. Mr Wyndham said it was a silly request as he was not the Sessions Judge. How could he provide a job to the boy? "Didn't the station master stop the train for you at the risk of his job?" I ventured. He thought for a moment, called the station master and said to him: "Since you obliged my tahsildar, I must help you." He gave a letter of recommendation and the boy got the job.

Now the non-cooperation movement was pretty brisk. The authorities were equally determined to suppress it. Mr Zakaullah Khan, sub-divisional magistrate, the highest official in town, had to face most of it. He came from a nawab family of Moradabad and was a man of culture and refinement. Though a very honest and faithful Government servant, he hesitated to resort to low practices which the Government wanted him to adopt. He took all legal action against the non-cooperators, made frequent use of Section 144, Cr. P.C., organised *Aman Sabhas* of the people loyal to the *Raj*, made frequent speeches at their meetings and did his best to suppress the movement. But he could not persuade himself to put the people in jail on charges

which could never stand the scrutiny of law, justice and equity.

Among the members of the *Aman Sabhas*, there were some titleholders and other self-seekers. They wanted the sub-divisional magistrate to take drastic action against some persons towards whom they were unfavourably disposed. In the guise of suppressing the movement, they were for wreaking personal vengeance. In the circumstances, the S.D. M. hesitated to comply with their wishes. I also turned a deaf ear when approached. Since Mr Wyndham frequently camped in the Tarai and Bhabar, and was accessible to all, these went on dinning into his ears that both the S. D. M. and myself stood for the movement and that we were deliberately not taking any repressive measures.

Mr Wyndham once asked me what I thought of the members of the *Aman Sabha*. I assured him that the *Aman Sabha* was a farce. Only low self-seekers were there. And for his benefit, I quoted the famous lines of the poet, Akbar Allahabadi: "Even an insignificant person is with Gandhiji. Though he is the dust of the road, the dust contributes towards the intensity of the whirlwind." He then told me that he had information that Mr Zakaullah Khan was under my influence and I dissuaded him from adopting repressive measures. I replied that the S. D. M. was my immediate superior officer and there was no question of a subordinate giving advice to his officer.

My explanation did not satisfy him. He had also a talk with Mr Zakaullah Khan. After a few days, Mr Zakaullah Khan was transferred from Kashipur

to become Inspector-General of Registration. I was reverted as naib tahsildar and sent to Kaladhungi. Rai Bahadur Babu Ramsaran Das was brought to Kashipur to suppress the movement. He was eminently successful in this.

6. Corbett's Kaladhungi

Kaladhungi, Jim Corbett's town, is at the foot of the hills. It supported a small permanent population then. The hills people migrated to the town after the Durga Puja for warmth and work and went back after the Holi festival. During the rainy season, the population was appreciably reduced. The hills people could not stand the heat and the malaria. That was long before the World Health Organisation era and the advent of DDT.

Even a small town of 500 was enough of a headache. As far as I can recollect, there were about 10 or 12 pucca houses in the town. One head constable was all the police. The non-cooperation movement was at its peak. The slogans of *Bharat Mata Zinadbad* and *Angrez Murdabad* rent the sky. The whole atmosphere was charged with anti-British feelings.

People in defiance stopped supplying fuel, grass and milk to the touring Government officers. There were no law courts and no schools at Kaladhungi to be boycotted. There was nothing much of the movement to be carried out, but there was tremendous noise. I found even the simple unsophisticated villager sullen and openly talking against the *Raj*. I soon had a taste of it when I had to make arrangements for the tour of Mr Darling, a member of the Board

of Revenue. I had to pay Rs 25 instead of the usual Rs 5 for the firewood and the grass for his camp. An equal amount was spent on the next camp at Kotabag. I submitted a bill for Rs 10 which was paid to me. I thought I would be considered guilty of misappropriating money if I demanded more. Nobody would believe me that it really cost Rs 50. A few days later, Mr Mumford, the Deputy Commissioner, came to Kaladhungi on his inspection tour and asked me about the trip of Mr Darling. I told him he got nothing to kill but had gone away perfectly satisfied with the arrangements.

Mr Mumford then casually told me that the year before, during his winter tour, he could not get grass for his pony and fuel for his kitchen at Bailparao and that he had to send his chaprasi to chop the wood in the jungle and his syce to cut grass. I had to admit that things were the same and I had to spend money from my pocket to save myself from being misunderstood. He was moved both by sorrow and anger—anger at my not submitting the full bill and sorrow at my inability to do so. He informed me that Mr Darling drew Rs 4,000 a month and he could easily afford to pay Rs 40 more. Oddly enough, he found a way to recompense me. While a naib tahsildar at Naini Tal, I had done some war work and Mr Jai Lal Sah had recommended me for a reward, I was given Rs 50 for the good work.

Mr. Mumford administered evenhanded justice to all irrespective of caste. I think he did not believe in the policy of divide and rule and neither did he show excessive zeal in putting down the non-cooperation

movement. He had a positive dislike for Mr Wyndham and his ways and once told me that Mr Wyndham was *razil parwar* (protector of the low) and not *harif parwar* (protector of the good). Whenever they happened to be camping together, Mrs. Mumford always wanted me to fix their tents at a respectable distance from Mr Wyndham. The reason she gave was that he smelled awfully. Was it because Mr Wyndham was an outdoor man? This was not the opinion of Mrs Mumford alone. He certainly was not popular with the ladies. Mr Wyndham was a bachelor. He seldom dressed well and cared little about his general bearing.

When Mr Mumford left Naini Tal to become Commissioner of Benares division, I went to the Kathgodam railway station to say good-bye. Mr Wyndham too was there. I saw Mr Mumford casually giving Mr Wyndham two or three minutes. I got some 12 minutes. Before the train left, Mr Mumford told me sadly that I should never expect a promotion from Mr Wyndham. This came true. He did not send my name up and whenever I asked him to consider my name, his stock reply was : "A tahsildarship is good enough for a Brahmin's son."

Pandit Govind Ballabh Pant paid a visit to Kala-dhungi in connection with his election to the U. P. Legislative Council. We were Kashipur friends and he stayed with me for two days. I did my best to help him. He was returned to the Council.

Sultana Bhantu, the bandit, gave us a scare one night. A rumour spread in the town that Sultana and his gang were due in the evening. The head constable at the police chauki came to me to organize

a defence party. We collected some 20 or 30 guns from the neighbouring villages and kept ourselves awake throughout the night. Sultana never harassed Government servants nor did he touch the Government till, otherwise he could have easily looted all the Tarai-Bhabar sub-treasuries which were poorly guarded. The robbers did not turn up that night.

Some Slogans

Mr Wyndham came down to Kaladhungi to watch the non co-operation movement at close quarters. I met him at the dak bungalow. He expressed a desire to visit the town next day. I warned him the people were rather excited and that it was not desirable for him to visit it in the circumstances. But he would not listen. I brought to his notice the fact that he was in my tashil and I would be held responsible if anything unseemly happened. He reminded me he was the Commissioner and I only a "petty subordinate" who knew nothing about the real state of affairs. I was in a fix. At last I told him that his life and safety were a matter of the greatest importance and though a Commissioner, he should not go against my wishes. But he picked up his hat and stick and started for the town. I had to follow. Not a single person on the way raised his hand to salute him and I knew he would be treated the same way in the town. I again tried to dissuade him but it was all in vain. When we entered the bazaar, none cared to greet him. We made two rounds of the bazaar. No hand was raised in salute and anti-Government

slogans were shouted with greater vigour and vehemence. People, apparently unconcerned, smoked, played cards and did the trading. None got up. From Mr Wyndham's face I could well read the situation. He felt greatly humiliated. Later, he told me: "Govind Ram, you are a very frank and honest man. What you told me at Kashipur, that every soul was against the Government, that the *Aman Sabhas* were a farce and that the Government servants alone stood for the Raj, is correct to the very letter. I am sorry I did not listen to you. I should have accepted your advice and stayed behind."

I accompanied him back to the dak bungalow. During our conversation, I casually blurted out that he had been unjust to me in getting me superseded twice in my grade promotions in spite of good work. Mr Wyndham was his old self again: "Who says you have done good work? If I say your work is good then it is good and if I say it is bad, then it is bad. Your brain has become heated and I shall take steps to cool it." The cooling came soon in a series of punitive transfers. I had transfers during the next year to the hills in the cold weather and to the Tarai and Bhabar in summer. I moved like a gypsy from place to place with my wife and children. When I left Champawat for Almora on a transfer, the snow was knee deep. My wife and children experienced considerable suffering in the journey which took five days.

Broken Lock

I stayed at Almora barely three months on one of

these transfers with one incident worth recollecting. One day I went out to make a local inspection to a place which was said to be five miles away. While leaving, I thought I would be able to return home in the evening. But the distance to be covered exceeded 10 miles and I was benighted on my return journey. It was peak winter and the night dark. I had a tahsil peon with me. At dusk, we came across a forest bungalow and decided to spend the night there. The chaukidar said as I had no permit, I could not occupy the bungalow. I asked him to be merciful but he was adamant. We were shivering with cold. At last I asked my peon to break the lock and open a room. We collected some firewood and kindled a fire to warm ourselves. But the night was terribly cold and the small quantity of fuel lasted about two hours only. While leaving in the morning, I wrote the fact of our occupying the bungalow under special circumstances in the visitors' book.

Next morning, the chaukidar of the bungalow went to the forest ranger at Almora with the broken lock and informed him about my occupying the bungalow without a permit. The ranger forwarded the report to one Mr Turner, D. F. O. of Almora division. He was an Anglo-Indian and he thought I had committed a crime. He wrote a report against me and sent it to the Deputy Commissioner, Mr Cruickshank, for necessary action. Mr Cruickshank called me and having heard the story, he wrote to Mr Turner: "Heavens had not come down if the naib tahsildar occupied the forest bungalow under the peculiar circumstances" and that it did not befit him

to make a report on a trifle like this. One had to be someone, a prince or a high Government servant, to qualify for a room in a forest rest house.

Tired of my wanderings, I wrote to Mr Anderson, Superintendent of the Tarai and Bhabar, to get myself transferred to some tahsil in the Bhabar.

7. *End of Gypsy Life*

After wandering for a year in as many as 10 tahsils, I was transferred to Ramnagar in the month of May. I met Mr Wyndham there.

"Has your brain become cool now?" he asked.

"It had become cool in the hills during winter, but it will again get heated in the Bhabar climate," I replied adroitly.

"I thought you would take leave," he added.

"If I had something to fall back upon, I would neither serve you nor the Tarai and Bahabar administration," was my reply.

"I am afraid you have not yet learnt a lesson," he remarked.

"I am prepared to undergo further harassment if you are so pleased to subject me to it," I said firmly.

I had hardly taken over, when I received an order from the Accountant-General of U.P. to refund Rs 192 which I had drawn in excess of the travelling allowance. Coolie agencies had been established in Almora district, and travelling there, I had charged my actual expenses supported by the receipts of the agencies. I had my wife and children with me and porters for two dandis were actually employed. I spoke to Mr Anderson about it. He told me not to

worry. He would find some means to compensate me. When Mr Wyndham returned after his evening shooting, I showed him the order. I was drawing Rs 70 a month then. I told Mr Wyndham that he was responsible for my misfortune (the frequent transfers) and that the amount to be refunded was about my three months' pay. He said I was well served and that he would not help me in the matter. I then casually said illegal gratification would be the only way to meet this unexpected and unforeseen expenditure. It was against his grain to deprive a man of his livelihood and I was quiet confident that the suggestion would enter his heart and move him to action. He told me he would get me dismissed if I talked of illegal gratification. I said it would have to be done quietly and none need know about it. But there was no doubt he too felt unhappy over the refund of a fairly large sum in view of my poor pay.

Mr Anderson, my immediate boss, now asked me to put up a bill for Rs 200 saying the grass had to be cut around my living quarters. I could not persuade myself to do so. Then he suggested that he would call me to Naini Tal to speak about certain files six or seven times during the Naini Tal season. I could stay there some days, escape the heat and save some Rs 200 from the travelling and daily allowances.

His wife, alas, was not so largehearted. Mrs Anderson once asked me to supply her a dozen eggs. These cost me annas 6. On the third day, she returned half the eggs. I refused to take them back. Mr Anderson heard the row and quietly slipped annas 6 into my pocket and went away. About two years

later, while I was tahsildar, Naini Tal, a milkman filed a suit for Rs 50 against Mr Anderson in my court. A tahsildar in Kumaon division could hear money suits up to Rs 100. Mr Anderson was then the Chief Engineer. A summons was issued for his appearance in court. Some days later, when I learnt about the case, I called the plaintiff and paid him the amount from my own pocket. But there was no time to prevent Mr Anderson's coming to Naini Tal as the summons had been sent. He came to my court on the date fixed for the hearing, but the case had already been disposed of and a receipt obtained for full payment. When the court work was over, Mr Anderson took me to his bungalow and insisted on paying me Rs 50. I said I would not accept it on any account. Then he reminded me of the row for annas 6 at Kaladhungi and somehow I now cared little for a sum of Rs. 50? I said my pay at Kaladhungi was only Rs 70 and it was now Rs 190.

T. A. Trouble

Three months afterwards, I received a letter from the U.P. Government saying that the sum of Rs 192, to be refunded by me, had been waived by the Government on the recommendation of the Commissioner. Mr Wyndham had written that the amount exceeded my two months' pay and I could pay only by borrowing. Mr Anderson, of course, had fulfilled his promise and enabled me to earn about Rs 150 as travelling allowance on a number of trips to Naini Tal.

OF THE RAJ

There were no ziledars in Bhabar and Tarai then. Whenever there was a breach in a canal during the rainy season, the naib tahsildar with the help of the people concerned closed the breach to ensure steady supply of water. I had trouble from one of Mr Wyndham's friends. The friend, Thakur Anup Singh, sent a complaint that water could not reach his village because of a breach. He sent a man to me demanding quick steps to repair the irrigation channel. I asked him to inform the Thakur Saheb that I would need some men to close the breach and Thakur Saheb should send some. At this, the man asked me if I knew the Thakur Saheb was a great friend of the Commissioner. I knew it was a fact, but the minion's behaviour savoured of impertinence and I thrashed him.

Thakur Anup Singh, a hillman from Almora district, owned some flourishing villages in Ramnagar tahsil. He was the *pradhan* of the villages, and according to custom, all his tenants gave one day's free labour to cultivate his land. He earned a lot growing *lai* (mustard), rice, and wheat, built a substantial building and exercised considerable influence in the whole tahsil in general. He was made a Rai Bahadur and an honorary magistrate. Towards the close of Mr Wyndham's career, Thakur Anup Singh's villages were converted into zamindari villages and he became a zamindar on the 72-28 system.

Needless to say, he was annoyed with my behaviour with his man. He went to Naini Tal to speak against me to the Commissioner. He told the Commissioner that he had sent a wicked naib tahsildar

to Ramnagar who had deprived him of his due share of irrigation water. Mr Wyndham told him I would neither listen to the Commissioner nor to him, but to God alone and that he (Thakur Anup Singh) should go to me and explain his difficulties. He added that I was not wicked but a straightforward and honest Government servant. Thakur Anup Singh came to me in a chastened mood. When Mr Wyndham came to Ramnagar during the winter, he himself mentioned the conversation he had with the Thakur. He, however, asked me to help the Thakur.

Sir William Marris, Governor of U. P., was now invited by Mr Wyndham to a tiger hunt and I was asked to arrange transport for 20 maunds of luggage from Ramnagar to the hunting camp, some 12 miles away. From past experience, I was certain the luggage would exceed 50 maunds and I managed to hire bullock carts to carry 80.

Unaccounted Expenses

The day the Governor was to arrive at Ramnagar, Mr Wyndham graciously asked me if I would like to shake hands with the Governor. I had met several Governors and dignitaries by now and shaken hands with them without any particular feeling. I teased the Commissioner: "What good would it bring?" He said it was a matter of honour. To this I replied how could he talk of honour when he himself considered me a *bhangi* (sweeper) and dishonoured me in public by using the most filthy language. "Who says I consider you a *bhangi*?" I said it was the feeling inside. In the evening, when the Governor came, Mr

Wyndham introduced me as the naib tahsildar of Ramnagar and His Excellency extended his hand. The ceremony over, the Governor and his party got up the elephants and left. The baggage was loaded on the camels, which followed. The baggage totalled 100 maunds and the camels had to be loaded rather heavily. The result was the baggage could not reach the camp before midnight. His Excellency was naturally annoyed and asked the Commissioner to ask for an explanation for the delay. Next day, I received two chits from the Commissioner in one envelope. The upper chit asked me to explain why His Excellency's luggage reached so late. The lower said that I need not be perturbed and could write that the Governor had written he would bring 20 maunds of luggage, whereas he had brought 100 maunds. The explanation satisfied all.

The Governor's camps were expensive affairs. Blocks of ice had to be carted from Rampur to the camp every day for chilling the soda and whisky. Country liquor had to be got for the use of the Mirzapur trackers of the Commissioner. Provisions and vegetables were requisitioned daily. The Commissioner had advanced me thousands for the daily expenses. I used to buy the items and record the amount in a notebook. But I was kept so busy that it was impossible to remember every item of expenditure. Many items could not be recorded and accounted for.

His Excellency bagged a tiger and his companions sundry game. The party returned happy to Lucknow. Mr Wyndham asked me to produce the accounts. I told him I had spent all the money advanced by him and

that Rs 1,000 could not be accounted for. He took the account sheets from me and distributed Rs 1,000 over various items of expenditure, adding Rs 200 to a bigger item, Rs 150 to a smaller one and so on. He kindly remarked that neither he nor I had appropriated the money and that it was natural not to record all the items of expenditure while so much had to be done.

8. Two Settlements

The Bhabar land settlement had to be done every 10 years. It was 1924. A new survey and record operation was due. Mr F. Anderson, who had a soft corner for me, recommended me for the post of Assistant Settlement Officer on a consolidated salary of Rs 500 a month for ten months. The Commissioner endorsed his recommendation and submitted the proposal to the Government. The sanction was received and I started record operations both in the Kham and Hissedari villages. Babu Jwala Prasad, a kanungo in Kashipur Tahsil, was appointed *munsarim* to supervise the survey operations and I recruited experienced *amins* from Garhwal to measure the land.

With only a few months left to complete the work, Mr Wyndham called me and said, "You are not on good terms with Mr Eddy, the Deputy Commissioner and your settlement officer. I am going on two months' leave. You should, therefore, put in an application saying that the work would take two months more. This will fetch you Rs 1,000 extra and if Mr Eddy wrote any unfavourable remarks against you, I shall be here to contradict them." I applied for an extension and it was granted. In the meantime, I finished the settlement report and Mr

Eddy, in his forwarding note, wrote that he had thorough confidence in my judgement.

The Commissioner returned from leave and I met him at the Haldwani railway station. He was pleased to see the remarks of Mr Eddy and told me that he would make very favourable comments in his forwarding note to the Government. After my reversion from settlement work, I was posted to Haldwani tahsil as tahsildar. Mr Eddy had recorded in the inspection book that the Haldwani tahsil had not had a good tahsildar for some time and Mr Kala should be kept there to get things right.

Mr Wyndham Retires

Mr Wyndham was now on the verge of retirement and the people of Kumaon division decided to give him a big send-off. All the titleholders, retired gazetted officers, Government servants still on duty, all prominent people in public life, lawyers and businessmen came down to Haldwani. A party was arranged. He posed for a photograph with the naib tahsildars and tahsildars of Kumaon division. The Commissioner had sent me out on some errand and I could not reach on time. He was annoyed, but waited for me to be photographed.

Two days before his retirement, I went to him to settle old scores. I told him he had treated me very shabbily and that he had recommended two high school-educated tahsildars for Deputy Collectorship ignoring my claims. Even then, I said, the day would come when I would become a deputy collector in spite of all his efforts to put me down. He resented

the remark and told me that he could still dismiss me then and there. How could I dare to talk in that strain to a person on the verge of retirement? I said I had been talking in that strain for quite some time and that he could get me dismissed not only just then but even from Kenya, where he was going. In great anger, he asked me how could he get me dismissed from Kenya. I told him his kith and kin would be Deputy Commissioners and Commissioners and a tahsildar could be dismissed on the flimsiest of charges. He dismissed me from his presence with his usual "damn" and told me not to show my face to him again. After I had gone some distance, he asked his jamadar, Nar Singh, to call me. As soon as I went to him, he covered his face with both his hands and said: "Govind Ram, I have done you great injustice. But what can I do? It is too late." I said he could still do much. He could get the character roll from Naini Tal and make a good entry. He wired to the head assistant of this office to send my character roll. It was received the next morning. Then he asked me what he should write. I said my mother tongue was not English and he could write what he really felt about me. He wrote: "A very good tahsildar. Has got very good reputation, but has suffered from continuous illness in Bhabar and Tarai and deserves Naini Tal, where he shortly goes. He shall be fit for nomination to a deputy collectorship next year." Thakur Dewan Singh, a clerk in the Commissioner's office, who did not like me, omitted "next year" from the copy maintained in the Commissioner's office and I had to draw the attention of the head

assistant to have it recorded.

Thus closed 12 years of service under Mr Wyndham in Kumaon division. I still think Mr Wyndham was one of the greatest member of the Indian Civil Service. He took paternal interest in his subordinates and even did not mind people talking back. I well remember, once while I had gone to meet him at Naini Tal, he had dismissed me without a word. As I left, he asked his peon to run and call me back. The peon commented that he had only two legs and that he should talk properly to a naib tahsilder from the Bhabar and Tarai. The poor fellow must have passed the night in some bug-infested house in the bazaar with somebody. Mr Abraham Benson, his steno, took great liberties with him and once while he was being nagged for his slow typing, he told him that he did not have four hands. He often provoked his subordinates making them talk back. He discouraged the monopoly of a particular class in Government service and encouraged the backward people. His outward behaviour was very rough but his interior soft. When he heard of my appointment as deputy collector a year later, he wrote me a letter from Kenya. It read: "My dear Govind Ram, I am much pleased to hear that you have been appointed Deputy Collector. Please accept my sincere congratulations. I hope you will continue to flourish. The snows of Kilimanjaro are as far from here as Trishul is from Gwaldam. Yours sincerely—P. Wyndham."

Mr Wyndham was succeeded by Mr Pearson, a very senior officer almost on the verge of retirement. Mr N.C. Stiffe, a Senior I.C.S. officer, succeeded Mr

Pearson. As tahsildar, Naini Tal, I met Mr Stiffe at the lake-end to receive him. He told me that as he knew the way to his bungalow, I need not accompany him. But I insisted on going with him. He raised no objection and on the way he asked me several personal questions. When the time for the nominations came, he sent for my character roll and made me his own nominee. Mr J.M. Clay was Deputy Commissioner, Naini Tal, at the time. He was polite and courteous outwardly, but a dried up bureaucrat within. His justice and impartiality were, however, well known.

Record and settlement operations were to be started in Garhwal district and Mr Stiffe suggested the names of Thakur Praduman Singh and Mr Frank Rawat for the post of assistant record officers. Mr Rawat did not like the job and expressed his unwillingness to go to Garhwal. The Commissioner then asked me if I would go. I agreed. Mr Pim, a member of the Board of Revenue, was in charge of the overall settlement work. A certain deputy collector, who wanted to go to Garhwal in my place, informed Mr Pim that I was too weak for strenuous work. Mr Pim then asked Mr Clay to give a report on me. The latter, who was to make a local inspection some five miles away from Naini Tal, asked me to accompany him. We had to walk two miles downhill to the Brewery, below Naini Tal, and three miles further down on the cart road. I had no difficulty in walking. On the return journey, we had to climb two miles up to Naini Tal. I walked very fast and even Mr Clay could not keep the pace. Upbringing in the hills has its advantages.

Mr Clay submitted his report : "Pandit Govind

Ram is of wiry build. His health certainly suffered on account of prolonged service in the Tarai and Bhabar but it has considerably improved since he came to Naini Tal. I should think this is just the work the Government should give him to make him robust again." On the strength of this report, I was ordered to proceed to Garhwal to take up the work of an assistant record officer under Mr A. W. Ibbotson.

With Ibbotson

I reached Pauri in October 1926. Mr Ibbotson was a smallish man with a well-knit body and phenomenal energy. He had distinguished himself in World War I and was awarded the Military Cross. A Senior Wrangler in Mathematics, he could correctly give out the area of a field by walking over its length and breadth. He could frame two scales—one for the area and the other for the assessment rate—in an incredibly short time. According to his own talk, he was one of the Seven Devils of the Indian Civil Service. He was a skilful rider and could cover the distance between Lansdowne and Pauri, some 34 rough miles, in five hours. During his leisure hours, he made rope. He needed no barber. With the help of two mirrors, he could cut his own hair. He also shod his horses himself. Mr Ibbotson was a follower of Mr Wyndham too in his hatred for the Brahmin. But unlike Mr Wyndham, Mr Ibbotson could never hide his strong dislike of the Brahmin community. He was in the hands of a Rajput clique which seized every opportunity to poison his mind against the Brahmins. The leading Congressmen of the district, Pandit Ansuya Prasad

Bahuguna, Pandit Bhola Datt Chandola and Pandit Vileshwara Nand Doval were all Brahmins. Pandit Bhola Datt Pant, S. D. M., Pauri, and Lala Prem Lal Sah, A.D.M., also aggravated Mr Ibbotson's hatred by constantly dinning into his ears that the Brahmins of Garhwal were dead set against the Raj.

The settlement operations were started in Pargana Barahsyun first. It took about two years to finish the work. Mr Ibbotson himself wrote the revenue rate report. The Government, however, discovered that it would be a very expensive affair if the whole district was placed under record and settlement operations. In respect of other parganas, the Government wanted to increase the revenue by annas 5 a rupee and assess all the *nayabad* lands not assessed to revenue previously.

The work was very arduous and I spared no pains. But Mr Ibbotson used to nag and interfere even in insignificant matters. Once an amin, Prasad Singh, fell ill and I had to bring him to my camp for treatment. He requested me to replace him by his son, who was qualified to do the job. I appointed his son and sent the papers to Mr Ibbotson. Someone told him that he was a Brahmin and I was helping one. Mr Ibbotson disapproved of my proposal. I wrote to him, as the survey parties had gone ahead, I could not put off operations just for an amin. Since he was very strict, he ordered me to stick to the orders. I wrote back saying that I was not bound to obey unreasonable orders. He was in a great rage and asked his office to put up the papers at Pauri when I returned from the camp. When Thakur Praduman Singh and I visited

his bungalow, the papers were before him. He flared up on seeing me and menacingly raised his fist. Thakur Praduman Singh, a dear friend, got furious and told him that both of us would stand together if he made an attempt to hit me. This had some dampening effect on him. Now started wordy warfare. "How do you dare disobey me?" he growled. In reply, I said: "Ever since I came to serve you, I find that you interfere even in minor details. I am tired of your treatment and would very much like to revert to my original post. Does it befit you to raise your fist against a responsible Government servant? I am not prepared to serve you and you may inform the Government." This made him furious and he picked his stick to assault me. But Thakur Praduman Singh's warning was still fresh in his mind. I deemed it advisable to get out and went down as far as the public road below his bungalow. Mr Ibbotson followed me shouting all the way. Soon Thakur Praduman Singh followed me. We three were now running, he chasing us both. At last, Mr Ibbotson asked me to stop saying he meant no harm. I stopped. Mr Ibbotson then addressed me thus: "I lost my temper and it is no credit to me, similarly you lost your temper and it is no credit to you. I shake hands with you and let us forget and forgive the unfortunate incident. I shall never interfere in your work in future, rest assured."

Then I said, having worked in Garhwal district, he should have been aware that the suffix Singh never went with a Brahmin. It was a great shock to him when he learnt he had been misguided. Thakur Pirthi Singh was then the settlement head clerk. He was

very competent but an inveterate hater of the Brahmin community. He once took it into his head to lower me in the estimation of Mr Ibbotson by pointing out a flaw in my judgement. This started a pile of correspondence between Mr Ibbotson and myself.

A Long Walk

Once Mr Ibbotson took Thakur Praduman Singh and myself with him to walk some 14 miles from Dogadda to test our physical endurance. We had lunch half way. Both of us were dog tired. Thakur Praduman Singh had a small bottle of brandy and we shared it equally to give us strength to cover the journey. Miss Mayo's *Mother India* was quite a topic those days. The conversation somehow came to it. I had just read the book. Being wiry, I could keep the pace with Mr Ibbotson. Thakur Praduman Singh lagged behind. I was a bit relaxed with the brandy and discussed with Mr Ibbotson the undesirability of a publication based on rank falsehood and supported by facts which rarely see the light of day. Mr Ibbotson heard me with attention and at times even encouraged me to speak. When we reached our destination, Mr Ibbotson only remarked: "It's off now." He perhaps meant the discussion.

Mr Ibbotson could take it. The discussion did not warp his judgement about my work. He always made good entries in my character roll every year. One great quality which I found in almost all British I.C.S. officers was that they painted a subordinate as he really was or as they thought he was without allowing any other consideration. They were quick to recognise

merits and drawbacks.

Thakur Praduman Singh was the nominee of Mr Ibbotson for deputy collectorship. He was called to Lucknow for the interview. He thought he better meet Mr Ibbotson on his way. The latter asked his camp clerk, Thakur Dewan Singh, why Thakur Praduman Singh had come. The clerk replied that he must have come for a letter of recommendation to the Board of Revenue. Thakur Praduman Singh felt it was insulting. He, however, took a letter of recommendation which Mr Ibbotson gave of his own accord. He was not selected that year. I advised my colleague not to take his letter at next year's interview. He was selected that year.

For the purpose of assessment, the Government had to make both the assistant record officers, temporary deputy collectors and assistant settlement officers. The other ARO, Thakur Praduman Singh, had already been selected and I had no difficulty in the selection because by then I was a temporary deputy collector and assistant settlement officer. Besides, I was the nominee of the Commissioner, who had recommended me very strongly.

Lucknow for Interview

I was now called to Lucknow for the deputy collectors' interview. On my way, I thought it advisable to meet Mr Ibbotson at Lansdowne. During the course of conversation, he asked me if I wanted a letter of recommendation. I replied in the negative and added that the selection committee was guided mostly by the character roll of a candidate and to some extent

by how he fared at the interview. Thakur Praduman Singh had definitely asked me not to take a letter and I thought it was wise counsel.

By now I had submitted my report on the settlement in Pargana Dewalgarh. As soon as it reached Mr Ibbotson, he wrote the following letter to me :

Lansdowne
25.6.1928

My dear Pandit Govind Ram,

I am delighted with your revenue rate report of Dewalgarh. It is excellently written and the figures seem accurate and it is quite good enough to go forward as it is practically without any alteration.

I am sorry to hear you are unwell again and hope you will soon recover.

Remember, I want no hard work from you during the rains provided the A.S.O.-in-charge just sees that the office carry on properly, that is all that need be done at any rate till these revenue rate reports are sanctioned.

Apart from this, the more rest you can get, and the fitter you consequently are for next year's inspections, the better I shall be pleased.

With good wishes and congratulations on your first revenue rate report.

Yours sincerely,
A.W. Ibbotson


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9. *Deputy Collector at last*  
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The famous lines of Shakespeare ring true that there is a divinity that shapes our ends. The chapter of accident plays a very important part in guiding one's destiny. Altogether, there were 12 candidates to be interviewed, nine Muslims and three Hindus, two posts were to go to the Hindus and one to a Muslim.

Among the Hindus, a Kayastha tahsildar was the first to be called in. The selection committee placed in his hand a letter which his collector had addressed to the committee. The letter reflected on his honesty and contained some damaging remarks. He came out disappointed and told me what had happened. In these circumstances, his selection was out of the question. The next man, the son of a judge and nominee of Mr Pim himself, was told that he was too young and could afford to wait. By a coincidence, my revenue rate report on Pargana Dewalgarh had reached Mr Pim that very day. As soon as I entered, he congratulated me on the report. I thanked him. The selection committee asked me why I had not been selected the year before. I said it was a question for the committee itself to answer. They told me they could not take two candidates from Kumaon division. Then they asked me about Thakur Praduman Singh's educational qualifications and the post he had held at the time

of his selection. I replied he had passed the high school examination and was an A.R.O. Then they put the same question to me. I said I had studied up to B.A. and now I was a temporary deputy collector and assistant settlement officer. Mr Macknear, the other member, who had been a deputy commissioner of Garhwal, asked me where I lived. I replied I came from Sumari, a big village facing the town of Pauri on the other side of the valley, and that I was in school while he was there. To the next question, if I wanted to say anything, I said I must be selected this year. They did not like the word "must". I said I had nothing to say beyond it.

Two Muslim gentlemen and I were selected that year for deputy collectorship. Those days, promotions from the subordinate service were rare. I had already spent the best part of my life in subordinate service in uncongenial surroundings and the promotion at the age of 40 did not inspire much hope. Mr Stiffe, who had nominated me twice, was very happy at my selection and congratulated me. But Mr Ibbotson expressed no feelings.

The settlement work gave me little time to study. But I watched both civil and criminal cases for a time in the court of Pandit Bhola Datta Pant, S.D.M., Pauri. I did not like Pandit Bhola Datta's behaviour and ceased visiting his court after a week or so. I had already exercised second class magistrate's powers as tahsildar at Naini Tal. I was now given some judicial work at headquarters. I also used to inspect the thanas at Srinagar and Kotdwar. I now got the call and proceeded to the Moradabad Training School at

the end of December 1929.

Training School

The Moradabad Training School was housed in a big building known as Dam Dama Kothi. It belonged to the Maharaja of Tehri-Garhwal and I think the Government had taken it on rent. It had a big compound where the tents of the deputy collectors, tahsildars and naib tahsildars were fixed. The I. C. S. and Political Service officers under training made their own arrangements for board. Some honorary magistrates too were there for training, also a few incumbents from native states.

Mr Sheriff, I. C. S., was the principal of the training college. He had three deputy collectors as his assistants. They were Messrs Bilgrami, Ugra and Masudul Hasan. Mr Sheriff was a tall, thin and active person. Every morning, he took us out for riding to the adjoining villages and sometimes through the town of Moradabad itself in peak traffic. Mr Sheriff belonged to the old school of bureaucrats who generally kept their subordinates at a respectable distance to maintain their dignity. If he found a deputy collector standing with his hands in his trouser pockets, he would get angry. The new I. C. S. probationers mixed freely with the deputy collectors during the recess. These were of post-1930 vintage, more sympathetic to the Indians than their predecessors. This mixing was resented by Mr Sheriff. He often told them to keep themselves at a distance and behave as superior beings. Some of them took a defiant attitude and never listened to him. The Indian I. C. S. officers,

Messrs Lobo-Prabhu, Shivdasani and a Muslim gentleman, of course, kept themselves aloof, but Messrs Soloway, Vernede, Lewis-Lyde, Mason and others mixed well. The political officers, who were all Englishmen, had little superiority complex and moved about with else among all.

Mr Bilgrami was well versed in revenue law. He had written a commentary on the Agra Tenancy Act. It was considered one of the best at that time. He had fine features and his behaviour and dealings with the trainees were those of a thorough gentleman. He was straight, courteous and impartial and wanted the P. C. S. officers to establish a reputation for honesty, industry and superior intellect. He paid more attention to a serious study of law than to teaching for the examination. There is no doubt that officers like him raised the status of the P. C. S. in the eyes of the British I. C. S. officers, who considered themselves a cut above.

Mr Ugra was a Kashmiri Brahmin. He was not easily accessible and we were rather afraid of him. But his rough exterior concealed a very soft interior. He was most helpful and took keen interest in the welfare of the trainees. One day I did not go out with the riding party on account of sheer laziness. I do not know how he discovered it, but he came to my tent and asked me straightaway to go. He did not want me to incur the displeasure of Mr Sheriff. We had to learn Urdu as well. Some of the deputy collectors did not know a word of Urdu even though they came from the plains. A hill man like me was not expected to know much of it, for the court language in the hills

is Hindi. Mr Ugra came to our assistance at the last moment, otherwise Mr Sheriff would have detained us to learn a little more Urdu.

Mr Masudul Hasan was comparatively young. He was easy going and friendly to all, but more so to the I. C. S. officers, who were likely to be useful to him in future.

The deputy collectors, who came through the competitive examination, used to sit together in the class. They considered themselves superior to us who had been promoted from the subordinate service. The two Muslim gentlemen, who had been selected with me, kept together. I had my tent in the same line with the deputy collectors who had come through the competition. They derogatorily called me N.T. (Naib Tahsildar) and always gave themselves airs. Then came the examination. I had very little experience of the Agra Tenancy Act because of my hills background and almost knew nothing of the Oudh Rent Act. Perhaps, Mr Sheriff understood my difficulty and helped me. Mr Masudul Hasan gave me 14/30 marks in the Oudh Rent Act paper. We were expected to pass with higher marks and 14 marks were definitely too low. Mr Sheriff with his own hand converted 14 into 28.

Good Result

I had already exercised second class magisterial powers as tahsildar, Naini Tal, for about a year and I knew the technique of writing a judgement. The direct deputy collectors were new to the work. In the first examination on judgement writing, I got A+1.

Others got either B or B+1. They were all surprised and read the judgement I had written. Next, in the general knowledge paper, I fared very well and secured 90 marks out of 100. I do not know the stuff which comes out successful in the competitive examinations now, but I can say without fear of being contradicted that some of my direct-entry colleagues could only write better English. There were some whose knowledge of English was definitely poor but science and mathematics had brought them success. All the direct deputy collectors with me in the training class were promoted to the I.A.S. Some even became Commissioners and one a Judicial Member of the Board of Revenue. A low start in life, besides crushing one's spirit, deprives one of the initiative for advancement in life.

The excellent training imparted at Moradabad gave us an insight into the working of law and sufficient experience in executive and judicial matters. To mix with a number of I.C.S. officers, political officers and P.C.S. officers was itself an education. Mr Sheriff invited experts on agriculture, irrigation, education, music and religion to deliver lectures. This widened our outlook and reduced the monotony of life.

Mr Sheriff took an active part in football and hockey and expected all the trainees to play these games. I used to stand in a corner of the field and hardly ever managed to kick the football. He complained of my indifference towards games. An Englishman at 40 is still young but an Indian of the same age feels he is at the door of old age.

Riding Test

The riding test was fraught with dangerous possibilities. We had to clear three or four hurdles. Some young deputy collectors got through but Mr Bisheshwar Nath Khanna went down with his pony. With great difficulty, we managed to take him out of the pit, but it served as a warning to Mr Sheriff. I was the next man to ride. Mr Sheriff looked at me closely. Reading his thoughts, I said I had half a dozen children to support and could not afford to break my neck. He agreed with me and said that as I had been riding with him for three months, he would exempt me from the test. The other deputy collectors were also exempted.

We had also to pass a rifle shooting test. I had never handled a gun in my life and showed some hesitation. Mr Sheriff was very cross and told me that all the hill men who came for training had guns and knew how to shoot. He asked me to try at least. A political officer, who was standing there, came to my rescue. He stood by my side and told me to aim at the circle in the middle of the target and fire. I fired. Luckily, the bullet hit the target.

Revolver shooting was another test. I could not press the trigger in spite of all the will. The examiner, a Superintendent of Police, examined my fingers and then kept quiet. I told him that I was a hill man and Mr Sheriff would detain me for a week or so if I failed to pass this test. "Where are you posted?" he asked. "At Almora", I replied. "Almora is not a criminal district, but you must promise me that you will practise revolver

shooting there." I gave him my word of honour and he entered my name in the list of successful candidates. Later in life, I did acquire a revolver but never had the chance to fire it because I never could get ammunition for it, a 32.

I had learnt sufficient Urdu but it was still below the mark. Mr Ugra was the examiner. Mr Sheriff knew both Hindi and Urdu well and he was called a pandit for his remarkable knowledge of Hindi. While I was being examined, Mr Sheriff entered the room. Mr Ugra dismissed me at once saying that I had done very well indeed and it was beyond his expectations. Mr Sheriff, no doubt, took note of it.

After the examinations, a big farewell was organised for the trainees and each trainee was given the option of inviting a friend. Mr Sheriff met all the trainees in his office and bade them good-bye with such parting advice as he considered necessary. He told me I had done very well indeed and that he found me a very dependable person.


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*10. Almora, Ranikhet Days*  
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Mr N.C. Stiffe, Commissioner of Kumaon division, had written to the Government to post me to Almora district. My indifferent health was the first consideration. The second was that I would be readily available for settlement work if any district of Kumaon division was placed under record and settlement operations in the near future. Mr Stiffe was a fairly senior civilian while he was in Kumaon. Unlike Messrs Wyndham and Ibbotson, he was no empire builder. He never attempted to split the Brahmin and Rajput communities in the hills. He was too noble to do so. He displayed paternal solicitude for his subordinates. One example was the case of Thakur Ganga Singh. He was a naib tahsildar in Kumaon division, a B. Sc. and a talented person. But he was short tempered and never could put up with any insult from his superiors. The result was that none nominated him even for a tahsildarship. He was well-read and wrote good English. Mr Stiffe asked the Deputy Commissioner of Naini Tal to nominate him but he would not on the ground of his being quarrelsome. Mr Stiffe was of the opinion that everybody quarrelled when an occasion presented itself. Since the Deputy Commissioner would not nominate him, Mr Stiffe himself did so and appointed him a tahsildar at Kichha, in the Tarai. Poor Ganga Singh soon had his

last row. During an inspection, Mr Qureshi, an I.C.S. officer, while inspecting the sub-treasury, was rude to Thakur Ganga Singh. He asked Mr Qureshi to behave himself and only write in the inspection book whatever he thought of the work. This incident was the last straw on the camel's back and he was made to retire on a small pension. Thakur Ganga Singh was more often right, but the official hierarchy seldom departs from the beaten track.

Mr F.W.W. Baynes was the Deputy Commissioner of Almora district. Mr R.H. Soloway, Mr Ugra and I, we all had come together from Moradabad. Mr Soloway took charge of the Baramandal sub-division and Mr Ugra acted something like an Additional Deputy Commissioner. I was an additional officer. For a month or so, I had little work but soon the powers of a first class magistrate were conferred upon me. Mr Soloway had qualities of head and heart which endeared him to every one who came in contact with him. Whenever Mr Ugra went to his court, he would stand up to receive him and treat him with utmost consideration as if he were still his instructor at Moradabad. Mr Ugra was the most senior officer in the district and Mr Soloway felt he should be given time to rest after the hard work he had done as an instructor at the Moradabad Training School. We both, therefore, shared most of his work. Mr Ugra belonged to the old class of deputy collectors. He would write to the Deputy Commissioner in very polite language and treat him with the utmost respect. Whenever he thought I was not extra civil to the Deputy Commissioner he would take me to task.

Second Non-cooperation Movement

The Second Non-cooperation (Civil Disobedience) Movement was now on. It blew like a violent storm over the land, leaving none unaffected. It appeared that the storm would shake the British Government to its very foundation. The Government, of course, was determined to nip it in the bud. While a procession of Congressmen was passing through the Lala Bazar of Almora in defiance of the prohibitory orders under Section 144, Cr. P.C., the police took recourse to a lathi-charge with the result that some of the leaders sustained injuries. Victor Mohan Joshi and Shanti Lal, a man from Gujarat, were the worst sufferers. There was much indignation and sympathy for the sufferers. It gave a fresh handle to the movement.

Rai Bahadur Pandit Dharma Nand Joshi, a retired deputy collector, was so shocked at the happenings that he told Mr. Baynes that as he had caused bloodshed, he would never see his face again.

A reaction of the Civil Disobedience Movement in my own house was that my wife pledged herself to the use of khaddar and since the year 1932, she has not used mill cloth on her person.

Nehpal Singh

One strange character I met at Almora was Thakur Nehpal Singh, I. E. S., Principal of the Government Intermediate College, Almora. He was dressed in khaddar, donned a Gandhi cap and did not at all care what the district authorities thought

of him. He was in the bad books of the Government and the inspector of schools, who belonged to the provincial service and were far inferior to him in rank and attainment, missed no opportunity to inform the authorities against him. He never called on the Deputy Commissioner, nor for the matter of fact, on any officer of the district. When Government rules required him to meet the Commissioner of the division and other dignitaries, he would go, pay his respects and come back in a minute. Mr Baynes and I happened to talk about him. The former spoke contemptuously of him and when I drew his attention to the fact that he was an I. E. S. officer, he remarked, after all he was only a schoolmaster.

I first met Nehpal Singh in connection with the admission of my sons and found him a very straightforward man. He always spoke in Hindi to Indians. Such a staunch nationalist was a rare thing then in the services. His son wanted to go to England and he asked me to arrange for a passport. I told him to see the Deputy Commissioner, but he would not. I knew Mr Baynes' views about him. Luckily, I discovered that a first class magistrate could issue a passport and this I did myself. Thakur Nehpal Singh, after all, had not to see the Deputy Commissioner.

Thakur Nehpal Singh afterwards became Assistant Director of Public Instruction, U. P., but he was passed over for appointment as Director in the Pant Ministry.

Treasury Defalcation

An interesting case I had to handle at Almora

was the defalcation at the treasury. The treasurer at Ranikhet visited Almora and discovered an embezzlement of Rs 80,000 in the Almora Treasury. The tahsildar was a gambler. The embezzlement extended over a series of years in the service period of some 40 deputy collectors. The Deputy Collectors, who were in charge of the treasury, had not filled in the entries in the currency book in their own hand and left it to be done by the tahsildar. The modus operandi of the tahsildar was to fill in pencil the entries in the currency book showing the actual amount in the treasury for the day. After the treasury officer left he would erase the pencil entries and make fresh ones in ink to show the amount that should have been in the treasury. This continued over a number of years. Mr Basu, an accounts officer from the Accountant-General's office, was deputed to Almora to find out how the embezzlement had taken place and he discovered the pencil entries system.

I tried this case for six months. All the 40 deputy collectors were summoned on behalf of the prosecution. There were handwriting experts from Allahabad and among other witnesses, Mr Baynes, Deputy Commissioner of Almora, was there.

The charge-sheets were framed on four counts, dividing the total period over which the embezzlement extended by four. Pandit Laxmi Data Pande (Rai Bahadur and M. B. E.), a famous vakil of Almora, was appointed Government pleader to conduct the case. During the trial, Mr N. C. Stiffe, Commissioner of Kumaon division, paid a visit to

Almora. He asked me about the case and towards the end of the talk gave these instructions: "Do not write anything against the deputy collectors in your judgement. Deputy collectors these days are virtually deputy commissioners. They run the whole show leaving very little work for the Deputy Commissioner. In my early days of service, deputy collectors wrote their judgements in Urdu and by training and education they were incapable of doing what you people are doing these days. The tahsildar is an old man and deserves lenient punishment. If there is a heavy sentence, he will die in jail. Rs 80,000 for the Government is like 80 paise to us."

Mr Baynes, my Deputy Commissioner, on the other hand, wanted a deterrent sentence. I was in a fix. Being myself a deputy collector, I could never think of criticising my colleagues. At last, I sentenced the accused to undergo rigorous imprisonment for two years on each count, the sentences to run concurrently, and also to a fine of Rs 1,000, with six months' further rigorous imprisonment in default. The Government, however, realized Rs 250 from each deputy collector and Rs 500 from Mr Baynes. The prediction of Mr Stiffe turned out correct and the accused did die in jail some months later.

To Ranikhet

After 16 months, I was transferred to Ranikhet as Treasury Officer and Additional Civil Judge and

Additional Magistrate and Assistant Collector. Ranikhet then had the head treasury for the whole of Kumaon division. Now we have full time treasury officers. Those days a treasury officer was required to do judicial work as well. I was new to treasury work and the new head clerk also had absolutely no experience. We committed serious mistakes in the code telegram that is sent to the Accountant-General's office at the close of the day's work. The Accountant-General's office demanded my explanation and asked me why I should not be reported to the Government for carelessness. I replied that I was new to the work and so was the treasury head clerk and hence the mistake. But I assured them that mistakes would never recur.

Another incident which is still fresh in my memory is worth recording here. A Roman Catholic priest was transferred to Ranikhet but we had not received his last pay certificate. He came to demand his pay. I expressed my inability to oblige him. He was no doubt very angry. He said he would make it very hot for me. I asked him to please himself. He wrote to the Accountant-General. The Accountant-General asked me to report. I stated the bare facts and communicated to him the clergyman's very words which he had uttered in his outburst. The Accountant-General wrote to him that he should apologise to me otherwise his last pay certificate would not be sent. He offered his apology.

The treasury also had to handle the pay of the troops. The tommies, who came to the treasury for money, often created a lot of noise and trouble. One

day, while I was trying a criminal case, they saw two police constables holding the accused with a rope tied to his handcuffs. Someone casually remarked that I could send a man to two years' imprisonment. This news spread quickly among the tommies and they started behaving better from the subsequent days.

Then there was the case of the tommy who was given a cheque by his officer to cash. On the way he settled down at a bar for a drink and forgot all about it. While I was on my way home after finishing work, he came running to me and fell at my feet saying: "You are my ma-bap". He narrated his story. "If I do not take the money today, I shall be punished," he said. I returned to the treasury and consulted the treasurer. We managed to pay the amount to the soldier. He was wild with joy and again fell at my feet.

Pension days were nightmares. Army pensioners from Garhwal came in large numbers. They experienced accommodation difficulties in the town and wanted to go home quickly. I had, therefore, to sit in the treasury right up to midnight. Mr Stiffe, the Commissioner, one day paid a visit to the treasury and asked me how I was getting on. I replied that the heavy work had already told on my health. About 700 civil cases were in arrears, a tough job for a deputy collector without the regular law training which the munsifs in the plains have. In addition to civil, criminal and treasury work, I was also excise officer and stamp officer for the whole district. Mr Stiffe soon wrote to Mr Baynes to lighten my burden but this was not possible as the

Civil Disobedience Movement was on. Mr Rahman was S. D. M., Ranikhet. His whole time was taken by the movement. He also entrusted to me all the judicial work of his court.

Tough Judge

A judge of the Allahabad High Court, an Englishman, visited Ranikhet to inspect the court. Mr Rahman and he had worked together in some plain's district and there was not much love lost between them. Mr Rahman took 10 days' casual leave and went away leaving me to face him. The judge was an ill-mannered man.

He asked : "Where is your diary of the civil cases?" I produced the diary in which the numbers of all civil, criminal and revenue cases were entered for a particular day. 'This is absurd,' he remarked. He had also asked for a large number of files, both of disposed and undisposed cases. They had already been stacked on one corner of my table. He examined many files to check if the issues had been properly framed. He brought to my notice the irregularities I had committed in framing the issues and was greatly annoyed. Then he picked up some files of the disposed cases to go through the judgments. To my surprise, he told me that 70 per cent of the judgments were correct and well written. He wrote this in his inspection note as well. Towards the end of his inspection, he again told me that the diary was not properly maintained nor the issues properly framed and that this state of affairs could not be allowed to continue. Thereupon, I addressed him thus, "My

Lord, a munsif in the plains has a staff of 10 or 12 clerks under him. He has a reader to assist him in his work and his LL. B. degree serves him in good stead. I am a treasury officer and have only one *alahmad* as my staff to help me in civil, criminal and revenue work. I have no regular legal training as a munsif has. I am a deputy collector and am not paid for civil work. If you want that the right procedure should be observed, I would request you to appoint munsifs in Kumaon division." He was not prepared to hear all this, but I had to explain my position. He wrote to the Deputy Commissioner that I had been impertinent to him.

Having finished with my court, he visited Mr Rahman's and was surprised to hear that he had gone on leave. His reader was there. There were not many civil cases in his court for a majority of them had been transferred to my court.

During the first year of my probationary period as deputy collector, I had the misfortune of incurring the displeasure of Mr Baynes, the Deputy Commissioner. He was a tall and robust man, full of energy and fond of liquor. His general appearance inspired fear.

In furtherance of their policy of divide-et-impera, the British Prime Minister, Mr Ramsay Mac Donald, in his communal award had declared the Depressed Classes, subsequently known as Shilpakars or Harijans, as a minority community entitled to separate electorates.

In pursuance of this policy, some Shilpakars of Almora town received considerable encouragement at the hands of the district authorities. Mr Hari Prasad

Tamta, a pushing man, was made Rai Bahadur. He educated the members of his family and acquired a higher status in the Shilpakar community of which he became an ipso facto leader.

Shilpakar Case

Some caste Hindus in the rural area of Ranikhet tehsil had beaten up some Shilpakars during a quarrel over some grassland. The latter lodged a report with the patwari (a revenue and police officer in the hills) that a particular caste Hindu had attacked them. In a second report lodged with the kanungo (revenue officer and inspector of police in the hills), they increased the number of attackers and added that some caste Hindu women had also come with scythes to attack them. The police challaned the case in the court of the S. D. M. who transferred it to me for disposal. It had by now become a sensational case as the Shilpakars had made a mountain of a mole hill. The case was fought tooth and nail and a considerable number of witnesses were produced on each side. Mr Hari Prasad Tamta, the leader of the community, was apprised of the day-to-day progress and since he was very friendly with Mr Baynes, he went on informing him about its progress. Mr R. H. Soloway. I. C. S., who was S. D. O., Baramandal, had also been keenly watching. Probably he was in the know of the views of Mr Hari Prasad Tamta as well as of Mr Baynes and dropped me a hint that I should be very fair in my judgement.

There were many discrepancies in the statements of the witnesses. The Shilpakars had made two diffe-

rent first-information reports to the police. The prosecution had failed to establish the case against the accused. The evidence adduced on behalf of the defence carried more weight. Rai Bahadur Pandit Laxmi Datta Pande argued the case on behalf of the caste Hindus very ably and pointed out discrepancies of a serious nature. I wrote a long judgement. I still remember the concluding portion of it, which ran as follows : "The Shilpakars had certainly been beaten up by the caste Hindus, but they have developed the story from day to day to such an extent that it is impossible for me to find out the kernel of truth within their shell of hyperbole. I, therefore, give the accused the benefit of the doubt and acquit them."

The Shilpakars were no doubt much disappointed. They attributed their failure to my being a Brahmin and told Mr Baynes that as a wearer of the sacred thread, I had sided with the caste Hindus and deliberately twisted the facts to ensure an acquittal.

Mr Baynes' mind was poisoned against me and his anger knew no bounds when he heard of the judgement. I happened to go to Almora and met Mr Baynes. "Why have you acquitted the accused in the Shilpakar case?" he asked. "On the strength of the evidence on record." I replied. "You have not appraised the evidence correctly," he added. "I do claim infallibility. To err is human," I said. "I shall file a Government appeal," he remarked. "I know a District Magistrate can do it," I said in reply. Then he said something which reflected on my honesty. I told him it was not my habit to argue with my superiors and more so in respect of a judicial verdict.

which could not be amended. He should, by all means, file a Government appeal. With these last words, I left his office.

Mr Baynes, of course, asked the Government pleader to collect the evidentiary material for the appeal. In course of time, the appeal was drafted and stress was laid on the fact that with centuries of high caste Brahmin blood running in my veins, I had a sub-conscious bias against the Shilpakars. I saw the copy of the appeal and felt that the insinuation was unjustified and that it was an extraneous fact and not part of the evidence on record.

Mr Baynes submitted the report to Mr Stiffe, the Commissioner, for transmission to the Government. He felt disinclined to forward it and returned the case saying that "it is a storm in a tea cup," that I had been a little stupid and should have fined some of the accused Rs 5 each to meet the ends of justice. But Mr Baynes insisted on its transmission to the Government and his wishes were fulfilled.

The Liquor Bottle

As part of the Civil Disobedience Movement, Congressmen began sending pickets to the liquor shops at Ranikhet. Mr Hari Prasad Tamta had bought these at the auction for a year. A few months after the Shilpakar case, he lodged a complaint with Ranikhet police saying that a bottle of liquor had been snatched from his hand. The case was challaned by the police in the court of the S.D.M. who sent it on to me for trial. I had already offended Mr Baynes and I expected further trouble if I tried this case.

Mr Rahman, S. D. M., was a thorough gentleman, courteous and mild. I went to him and made a request that it would be better if he kept the case on his file. During our conversation, he told me that the case had been engineered to delay the payment of the contract money. My repeated request, however, brought no response from him. I had to try the case. He asked me to consult Mr Baynes, but I was most unwilling to do so. As he insisted, I went to Almora to seek Mr. Baynes' advice. The moment I started talking about the case, he shouted that he never interfered in judicial matters. I was silenced.

I now went to Mr Soloway for advice with the case file. Mr Soloway first expressed his displeasure over my not convicting the caste Hindus in the Shilpakar case. "What would you do, if you had tried that case?" I asked. "Don't you know the difference between yourself and myself? I have been appointed by the Secretary of State for India and Baynes cannot do me any harm, while you have been appointed by the Governor in Council and Baynes can spoil your career. You are very 'ziddi' and you should be prepared to suffer the consequences," he remarked. 'Are you prepared to revert as a tahsildar?' was the next question. I replied that if it came to that, I should submit to God's will. Mr Soloway volunteered to go to Mr Baynes to find out what was in his mind.

After 10 minutes, he returned and told me that he found Mr Baynes quite mysterious and that he had failed to get anything out of him. He studied the file for a few minutes and typed out two judgments, one for acquittal and the other for conviction,

and gave them to me. But he told me to sign the judgement for conviction if I wanted to escape further trouble. I thanked him for writing the judgement and said that I would sign the judgement for acquittal and destroy the other one. He said I was awfully "ziddi". Then, as we walked together along the cart road, he again asked me to heed his advice. But as I shook my head, he said: "Go to hell then." I boarded the bus to Ranikhet, delivered the judgement next day and acquitted the accused. The judgement added fresh fuel to the fire and aggravated Mr Bayne's anger. But the Ranikhet public and some of the military officers, who were anxiously waiting for the outcome of the case, praised me for my integrity and fearlessness. It was a trumped-up case and a majority of the people knew that it was so.

Night Summons

"There is a providence even in the fall of a sparrow" is a truism which can never be refuted. Mr Baynes soon came to Ranikhet on official business. One night, while in the club, he happened to talk about the work of the magistrates at Ranikhet with a captain. The latter said that the "Hindu boy," who was also in charge of the treasury, was a very independent and fearless man and never hesitated to do justice. He referred to the liquor bottle case and said that on the alleged day he was on the scene. No liquor bottle had been snatched. He added that he was interested in the case and was pleased to hear the judgement. Mr Baynes left the club late. When he returned to the inspection

bungalow, a qualm of conscience seized him and he felt he had wronged me. He woke up his peon at 3 a.m. and asked him to call me immediately. I lived three miles away and the peon reached my house at 4 a.m. I thought it would be safer if I met Mr Baynes in the town. But the peon insisted on an early start and both of us reached the inspection bungalow about 5-30 a.m. The peon immediately announced my arrival. Mr Baynes came out, shook my hand, raised the *chik* for me as we went in and expressed his regret over the shabby treatment he had meted out to me. Then he described in detail what he had heard at the club. Mr Soloway, a well-wisher, of course, had left no stone unturned to change Mr Baynes' mind for my good. Some days after the talk with the military officer, Mr Baynes wrote the following letter to me :

Confidential

June 1, 1931

My dear Kala,

The military people in Ranikhet are thinking of recommending one Gulam Mohammad for the title of Khan Sahib in return for his help against the Congress. I know nothing of any help rendered by him and have written to ask Rahman. At the same time, Capitan Miller writes that you know all about it. Could you let me have a note about anything done by him ? Do you think it was sufficient to deserve a title from the Government ?

I learn from Soloway that you were upset over my letter to the Commissioner about the Shilpakar

case, and I write to say I am sorry that you should have taken it like this. All I meant to indicate was that I thought the acquittal was an honest mistake, and that I thought you were perhaps swayed by unconscious bias against the Depressed Classes. After all, you have hundreds of years of high caste blood inherited in your veins and it would be surprising if you had not a certain sub-conscious confidence in the higher castes. But I have the highest confidence in you, and regard you as one of the straightest and most honest officers that I have ever had the pleasure of working with and I should be very sorry indeed for you to have the slightest idea that I had any doubts whatsoever as to your absolute integrity. I am extremely grateful to you for all the help you have always given me, and I regard you as an officer of the best type. I hope this will reassure you.

With kind regards,

Yours sincerely
F.W.W. Baynes

R.H. Soloway

I have absolutely no doubt that this letter was written at the instance of Mr Soloway who deep down appreciated my judicial acumen and fearlessness. Mr Soloway was one of the latest additions to the Indian Civil Service. He was absolutely free from racial arrogance and had great sympathy for the Indian people and their aspirations. His conduct in his dealings with Indians was characterised by courtesy, friendliness and frankness. He never gave himself airs

and senior I. C. S. officers did not take kindly to him on account of this. He had a lot of humanity as well. A boy of a respectable family was prosecuted by him under Section 193, I. P. C., for making two different statements in his court. The case was transferred to my court. The accused appeared before me. He was just a boy and could not be expected to know the consequences of making contradictory statements in a court. I spoke to Mr Soloway about it and he asked me to award him lenient punishment.

Once, while Mr Soloway was at Naini Tal, I met him there. As I left his house, he started walking with me. I thought he was going somewhere. But he was not. He had come with me to save a rupee or two of mine which his peon would get from me ! I told him I had already paid him. He burst into laughter. As private secretary to his Highness the Nawab of Rampur, he started mills at Rampur to increase the income of the state and took measures to improve the lot of the common people. He was easily accessible and ready to hear grievances. He was transferred to the Centre to organise a department to provide employment to people who were discharged from the Army. With independence, he resigned from the Indian Civil Service like other British officers and went home. He was sent to Africa to prepare proposals for the betterment of the Crown colonies. He sympathised with the black people and made serious efforts for their emancipation from the British yoke. It is an irony of fate that good people are not given a long lease of life. He died shortly after completing the mission in Africa.

Mr Rahman went on leave and was succeeded by Mr Hasan Askari. Mr Askari had lived in England for some years and was an Anglophile. He had a European governess and lived in a bungalow on the top of a hill which commanded one of the finest views of the Himalayas. He was indifferent to the Civil Disobedience Movement and thought it advisable to go on tour even while the movement was at its peak. Mr Baynes once wrote to me that as Mr Askari did not listen to him I should at least promulgate prohibitory orders under Section 144, Cr. P.C. I wrote back in reply that I had no powers of an S.D.O. and could do nothing. The Government conferred the powers on me by telegram and also the powers to try cases under Section 108, Cr. P.C. By and by, the movement petered out in the town, but one Pandit Mathura Datta and his two companions, whose names I forget, spread disaffection in the villages. A warrant for their arrest had been issued from the court of Mr Askari but the patwari could not arrest them. They travelled from village to village at night. Mr Baynes had reminded me several times that they were still at large and no steps had been taken to arrest them. A patwari, however, arrested them and sent them to me for trial under Section 107, Cr. P. C. Pandit Mathura Datta and his two companions were educated people. At least one of them had held a respectable post in the district. When they were produced before me, I found privation and suffering writ large on their emaciated faces. Their dirty clothes and unshaven faces particularly touched me. I advised them to apologise in the court of Mr Askari from where the

warrants had been issued and to desist from political activity in future. They said it was not possible for them to go back, whatever the consequences. I happened to remark casually that there was more riff-raff in the Congress than sincere workers. "When men like you do not come into the arena, we must have riff-raff, at least to add to our numerical strength," one of them replied.

Prisoners' Lot

The warrants issued from Mr Askari's court were served on them and they were sent to the magistrate's lock-up. There were already 25 to 30 under-trials in the lock-up. They suffered on account of the severe winter cold. I had written several times to the Deputy Commissioner to get more blankets for them but there was no response. The clerk concerned sat over the papers. Red tape is the cause of considerable evil, for justice delayed is justice denied. When I visited the lock-up, the undertrials narrated their suffering during the long winter nights. I had five or six loads of pine needles spread over the plank floor at my own expense. This was all I could do under the circumstances. Ranikhet is 5,000 feet above sea-level.

The local sub-inspector of police sent a confidential note to the Deputy Commissioner saying that my sympathetic attitude towards the undertrials would give a push to the movement and that I should be brought to my senses. Mr Baynes came to Ranikhet immediately and asked me to accompany him to the lock-up. As we reached there, the undertrials started abusing us in the filthiest language possible

and brought to the notice of the Deputy Commissioner the fact that they shivered all night. The Deputy Commissioner then asked me how so many loads of pine needles had collected there. I told him that when my repeated requests for more blankets brought no response, I had to do it to give them some relief at my own expense. Some of the prisoners appealed to his sense of justice and told him that they too were human beings. I sent my peon to fetch from my office the copies of all the letters I had sent for the blankets as well as the acknowledgements received from the Deputy Commissioner's office. They were placed before him and he felt very unhappy.

When we left the lock-up, there was a fresh shower of abuse. I told the undertrials their conduct did not befit their station and education. On the way to my court, the Deputy Commissioner thanked me for providing the pine needles and said that if any one of them had died, he would have been censured for neglect of duty. During our conversation, I got a confirmation from him that he had come to make an inquiry on the report of the local sub-inspector of police. British Raj was a police raj and the authorities were guided more by the police reports than by the opinion of the Indian magistrates, whose activities were suspect, especially during the Non-cooperation and Civil Disobedience Movements.

Touched to the quick by the report of a subordinate, I asked the Deputy Commissioner to have me transferred at once. "What was the necessity of your coming here post haste? Could you not ask for a report from me? I would have given you the

bare facts," I remarked. I also told him that my conduct was motivated by humanitarian considerations alone and it was painful to see that he placed more credence on the words of a sub-inspector. He kept quite. Initially, I requested him to transfer the sub-inspector within 24 hours if he wanted me to remain at Ranikhet to carry on the thankless task of an S.D.O. without being actually one. The sub-inspector was transferred by telegram and Mr Baynes asked me to drive away the idea from my mind that he distrusted me.

The circle patwari had challaned Pandit Mathura Datta and his two companions under Section 107, Cr. P.C. This section applied to vagabonds who had no ostensible means of sustenance. I, therefore, wrote to the patwari that the challan was illegal and political prisoners did not come within the purview of the section. When Mr Baynes heard of their arrest, he wrote to me that they should not have been arrested under Section 107, Cr.P.C., and that if the Government came to know of it, he would find it difficult to defend me. I referred him to his several D.O.s in this connection and added that I felt I was myself competent to protect myself if asked to explain my conduct and that I would never seek his help. Mr Baynes replied by the return post and expressed his regret for the language in which the letter was couched and added that he would stand by me through thick and thin.

Mr Baynes did stand by me now onwards. One day I was going through a partition case. The partition amin had allotted a room to one brother and

its courtyard to the other and vice versa. The parties brought to my notice the iniquity of the amin's conduct. The amin, far from realising his mistake, began to argue in such a way that I got exasperated. Being short tempered, I threw a fat copy of the Indian Penal Code at him. His nose started bleeding. He sent a telegram to the Deputy Commissioner. I repented, but the arrow had been discharged and could not be called back. There were vakils and other officials as witnesses and I thought the case against me could be proved to the hilt.

Next day, Mr Baynes came to my court room and asked me to accompany him to an adjoining one. He asked me about the case and I gave him the bare facts. He told me that my conduct was highly reprehensible. I could have reported the amin for dismissal and that I should not have lost my temper in the court. I was guilty and had nothing to say to defend my conduct. Then he came to my court and heard the pleaders and the complainant. When the case was explained to him, he also got angry with the amin and the pleaders aggravated the situation by insinuating that the amin had been bribed. Mr Baynes remarked that no human being could tolerate such mischief and iniquity and looking towards me said that he would not have been surprised if I had thrown the next volume, the Criminal Code, at his head and smashed it. Thus ended an unhappy episode, but I had my full share of the punishment in the room adjoining mine.

Criminal cases were few in Kumaon division

but there was one murder case which deserves mention. A boy had fallen in love with the wife of an old man. The old man engaged his previous wife's brother to murder him. The boy lived alone in a house on the outskirts of the village and judging by hills standards, he was fairly rich. He had thick gold ear-rings and some money locked up in a box in his room. The murderer and the boy were on friendly terms. One night, the murderer went to his house and expressed a desire to sleep there for the night. The boy welcomed him. At night, the murderer hacked his neck with a sword, pulled off the ear-rings and removed a bundle of notes and some cash from the box. He concealed the ear-rings and the money in a pit and placed a heavy stone over it. The murder could not be discovered for three days on account of the isolation of the house.

The third night, a ghost voice addressed the whole village saying such and such had been murdered by such and such a man and that his ear-rings and money had been concealed in a particular field under a heavy stone. The village people next day went to the house and discovered the murder. In accordance with the story of the ghost, the village people and the patwari caught the murderer. The latter confessed to his crime and showed them the place where he had concealed the ear-rings and the money.

When I first recorded the murderer's statement, he stated he had not committed the murder. He had been implicated out of enmity. Regarding the recovery of the money, he said the real murderer must have planted it there to incriminate him. As I finished writ-

ing his statement, he started crying. Then he told me that I better tear off the statement and write another saying that he had committed the murder. I asked him the reason. He told me that the head of the murdered man was ever before him, glaring at him menacingly and that he did not want to live such a life.

Captain in the Dock

Another case was of the Englishman who got into a scrape with a bus driver. During the Civil Disobedience Movement, the Government had issued strict orders to Englishmen in general not to do anything which might offend the susceptibilities of Indians and any English Government servant found guilty of assault on an Indian would be dismissed forthwith. There was an exchange of hot words between the driver of a bus and a Captain and his servant. The driver took out the iron handle of the bus and aimed it at the head of the Captain, but his hat, which was badly pinched, saved him. The Captain and his servant, thereafter, belaboured the driver. The servant struck the driver on the head causing a grievous injury.

During the trial, the military officer produced his pinched hat and confessed that he had beaten up the driver with his bare fist. His servant also confessed that he was responsible for the grievous injury on the head of the driver. It was fairly late in the evening when I left the court. It was almost dark. The Captain met me on my way home and requested me to listen to him. He told me that if I convicted him,

he would lose his job. I told him that a magistrate is forbidden to have private conversation in respect of a case and that he was very ill-advised to approach me. He remarked that he was in hot waters and a dying person clutched even at a straw. "But you have made a confession that you struck the driver with your fist," I added. "You could have said that you did not beat him." He replied it was against his grain to tell a lie and then he appealed to me for mercy. "A magistrate," I said, "is guided by the evidence on record and should not be guided by extraneous considerations." He said I could exercise my inherent powers and after all, justice should be tempered with mercy. "I am afraid I cannot help you," I said. He suggested that I impose a heavy fine on his servant. That would really be a fine on him, for the fine money would go out of his pocket. This suggestion appealed to me. I wrote in the judgment that the driver was the first to assault and the Captain had acted in self-defence. I fined his servant Rs 500 for causing the grievous injury to the driver. No doubt, the fine was paid by the Captain. I have written this to illustrate the Army officer's love for truthfulness.

I had been waiting for a long time to hear the reaction of the Government on the appeal about the Shilpakar case. At last, the Government returned the papers with the comment : "Government have consulted their legal advisers and they are of the opinion that Mr Kala was perfectly justified in acquitting the accused." I do not know how Mr Baynes felt about it, but I think he must have received the

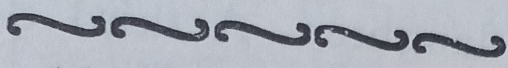
report with indifference.

Salt Satyagrah

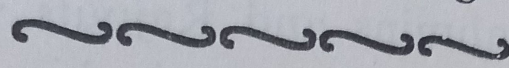
There are three Salt Pattis in Almora district. During the Civil Disobedience Movement, the people of these pattis took it into their head to fell a piece of the reserved forest. It was known as the Salt Satyagrah. The Government heard the news with dismay and took immediate action. A big police force was requisitioned and kept ready to meet any eventuality. Mr Baynes heard of the arrival of the force and reached Ranikhet. He was in an agitated mood and called me. A big house was under construction near the stand and several hundred coolies were at work there. I called the owner and asked him to lend the services of his coolies for two or three hours. He said he could send all the coolies for the whole day and would charge nothing from the Government. This gentleman was Lala Pyare Lal, a domiciled Marwari merchant of Almora town. After the police force had been dispatched, Mr Baynes referred to the services rendered by Lala Pyare Lal and I requested him to recommend him for the title of Rai Saheb next year.

In spite of all the precautions the Government took, the people of Salt Pattis decided to cut the forest. Mr Thakur Singh Negi, D.S.P., and I were deputed to prevent it. All the adult males, one per family, had gathered with axes at a spot to pass the night. They were to start felling the trees next morning. I entered their camp, smoked the hookah with them and explained that the Government would not

take the forest to England and that they would experience shortage of timber if they wantonly resorted to felling trees. Most of them were impressed by my reasoning. I used to try the area's civil and criminal cases and some of them knew me personally. Most of them left for their homes. Only 30 to 40 leaders of the movement stayed behind. Mr Negi easily arrested these. We brought them to a dak bungalow and confined them there. That very day, orders were received that all satyagrahis be released. We set them at liberty. Both Negi and me treated the leaders with sympathy and courtesy and yet the *Shakti* a Congress paper of Almora, condemned us for "inhuman treatment and lathi-charges." Some Congressmen had little scruples.



11. Border Posting



Pithoragarh sub-division, which now is a full border district, was the most backward area of Almora district. The people often made complaints against the deputy collectors posted there. There were many military pensioners settled there and they had to be pacified. Mr Baynes called me in 1932 and asked me to go to Pithoragarh. I was most unwilling, for a change from Ranikhet to Pithoragarh was like leaving heaven. "Deputy collectors crave for a sub-division. You seem to be a strange fellow," Mr Baynes said. "I am content to stay in the treasury if you would let me," I said. He replied: "You have got to go and I am not prepared to have any more discussion on the subject. But before you go, I would like you to spend half a day with me to hear the story of some of the deputy collectors posted there out of the confidential book." The next day, I received my orders and proceeded to Almora to receive instructions from Mr Baynes. He had the confidential book in his hand. It was a fairly thick book of over 500 pages. He read out to me the remarks of Collectors about the last ten deputy collectors who had held charge of the sub-division.

It was written about one that he never moved from one stage to another unless he had his full share

of basmati rice and a goat from the local people. Another deputy collector's character had been called in question and he was said to have been fond of a certain man's daughter. A third deputy collector favoured upper class Brahmins and treated the lower class Brahmins and Rajputs with contempt. This favouritism he also exercised in judicial cases. A fourth took bribe and a fifth accepted dalis of oranges, basmati rice and ghee. I listened to him with attention and rose to go. Then he accompanied me some distance and gave these instructions:

"You must behave like an I.C.S. officer and not mix too much with the people, at least in the beginning. You are the president of the Soldiers' Board and you must keep the soldiers in good humour and accept a drink if they offer it to you. You will, of course, not accept any dalis and I have no fear on this account." I promised I would follow his instructions except for drinking. I pointed out to him that I had been drinking in Bhabar and the Tarai and it took several years to get rid of the habit. Besides, a man with a small pay and a large family could not afford to drink. He agreed with me. While parting, I said: "I can only put things in order if you support me cent per cent." He replied that he would carry out my wishes to the very letter. During his stay in the district, he acted up to his promise and never gave me any cause for complaint. He also promised that he would later have me transferred back to Almora or Ranikhet though he thought I would be more useful as S.D.O., Pithoragarh.

Though Pithoragarh is only 50 miles from

Almora, it took four days to reach there. There was a bridle road only and one had to travel from one dak bungalow to another to pass the nights there. Now it takes a few hours by bus.

Snakes in Fort

The deputy collector at Pithoragarh lived in an old fort constructed during the Gorkha War. This house in the fort was infested with snakes which glided through the rooms in the summer and the rainy season. I wrote to the Deputy Commissioner about it but he took no steps. Next year, I wrote to him that I would no longer occupy the house, that I would prefer to live in a tent and would not pay the Rs 28 a month rent. The Deputy Commissioner then purchased a house from the local Christian missionaries for Rs 10,000. It was in a delapidated condition. He had it repaired and made fit for habitation. The court building nearby had only two rooms with a small verandah.

The local population did not exceed 500 with 50 or 60 houses. There were a few shops in the town which catered to the needs of the officials and the rural population. Overlooking the town on a high point stood the houses of the missionaries who conducted two schools, one for boys and the other for girls. The mission school for boys taught up to the eighth standard. Two high school classes had just been started in another school. Three miles up at Chandak, there was a leper asylum run by a missionary, Miss Reid. She belonged to an American mission. She lived in a small house near the asylum. She had

identified herself with the local people and exercised considerable influence. There was no proper treatment for leprosy then. Very few were cured. I think the secret aim was the conversion of the lepers to the Christian faith. In all the missionary activities—running schools, colleges, hospitals or any other organisation—I saw the same consideration guiding them.

I got down first to the problem of anonymous letters. The writers of these, I discovered, were some clerks in the S.D.O.'s court and the tahsil. I had them transferred and the number of anonymous letters, which they inspired, was reduced to a minimum. Mr Baynes appreciated my efforts. The Army pensioners were mostly interested in gun licences. I recommended these freely. Mr Baynes granted these. This minimised trouble from that quarter. Within six months of my arrival, peace and quiet was restored in the sub-division and I reminded Mr Baynes of his promise to transfer me to Ranikhet. He immediately replied saying I was more useful as S.D.O., Pithoragarh, and that I should not expect an early transfer. Pithoragarh had a rural touch. Lack of society and the amenities of life galled on me. We made a tennis court below the fort.

The sub-division had a common border with Tibet. We had the Lipu Lekh pass at 16,000 feet to cross over to Tibet from the Byas side, Joling Kong pass, of about the same height, from Darma side and Unta Dhura pass from Johar side. The Bhotiyas occupied the northern portion consisting of the regions known as Byas, Chaudas, Darma and Johar. The sub-division also had a taluqdari. The Rajwar of Askot

was a taluqdar whose territory bordered on Nepal and the Bhotiya regions. He was of Rajput descent and was held in great esteem. The Chand Rajas of Kumaon had brought a number of Pal families and settled them in Askot to provide bridegrooms for their daughters and brides for their sons.

Sale of Kanpur

Mr Baynes was transferred and I got a new Deputy Commissioner in Mr J.F. Sale. He was the Collector of Kanpur during the big Hindu-Muslim riots of the thirties. He was found lacking in firmness. His own subordinates, both deputy collectors and D.S.Ps., had deposed against him.

Mr Sale was a tall solidly built man who walked with a rolling gait. He just whistled whenever any inconvenient question was put to him. When he took charge of Almora district, I used to receive from him as many as 10 to 12 slips every day on different subjects. He had a vacillating mind. Perhaps, he found it difficult to take a decision. The slips were written by his steno at his dictation who addressed me as Pandit Govind Ram Kala. But Mr Sale used to cut out the word "Pandit" and write "Mr" above it. This continued for some months and I thought it might be in response to the wishes of the P.C.S. officers, who had made a representation to the Government that they be addressed as Mr in official correspondence. But Mr Sale had a different reason. He too hated the Brahmins and particularly the word "Pandit." His P.C.S. subordinates, who gave evidence against him at Kanpur, were mostly Brahmins.

During the winter, he came to Pithoragarh. A kanungo had gone on leave and I recommended the seniormost patwari with an excellent record for the temporary vacancy. He asked me to recommend a Rajput, but I informed him that I had already submitted my recommendation. Realising that I was a Brahmin, he added that he was not against the Brahmins. I replied that it would not matter at all if he were against the Brahmins. God himself was against this community for failing to live up to the ideals which their forefathers had laid down for their guidance, I added. He had to make a local inspection near the local temple of Shiva and of all days fixed the Shiva Ratri day for it. It was a gazetted holiday and I had kept a fast. He asked me to accompany him. I said it was a gazetted holiday and I had kept a fast. He then asked me if I was not paid for the day. I could not say anything more and followed him.

We got into the concourse visiting the temple. One stream of the people was on its way to the temple and another on its way back. All the way, I was greeted by the people with "Panditji, Pailagu." It continued right up to the temple. I could see colour mounting on Mr Sale's face. When we reached the temple, he stampd his foot and said, "Still Brahmin supremacy."

'Abusrd' Proposition

Mr Sale had the habit of setting one officer against another and creating friction. The agent of Thakur Dan Singh, famous timber men of the district, had felled some trees illegally and a report

was made to me. I sent the kanungo for enquiry and report. He said trees worth Rs 4,000 or thereabout had been felled. I brought this fact to the notice of Mr Sale, but added that under the Forest Act, he could not demand a compensation exceeding Rs 500. Mr Dharma Vira, I.C.S., was the S.D.O. of Baramandal and I was the S.D.O. of Pithoragarh. He sent the papers to Mr Vira. Mr Vira wrote on the file: "I do not understand how Mr Kala dared to advance such an absurd proposition." The file came to me and I was naturally annoyed at the remarks of Mr Vira. Mr Sale had gone as far as the Joling Kong Pass on his tour and returned to Askot, where I met him. I told him in clear words that his policy of making two officers fight was not commendable and that he could not realise Rs 4,000 from the offenders. The case was compromised for Rs 500 in accordance with the provisions of the Forest Act.

I wrote to Mr Sale that I took strong exception to the language used by Mr Vira and that he owed me an apology. When I went to Almora on official business, Mr Sale told me that Mr Vira was prepared to offer an apology but for that I would have to go to his bungalow. Mr Sale also reminded me that Mr Vira was an I.C.S. officer and it was very likely that some day I might serve under him. I said the future would take care of itself, I was concerned with the present only. Mr Vira expressed his regret. He was appointed Deputy Commissioner, Almora, some four or five years later and I worked under him for about two-and-a-half years. He was too good to nourish any grouse against me. I can only say that working under him was one of

the happiest periods of my service.

A Conversion

I now had trouble with the missionaries. The ones at Pithoragarh abducted the wife of a coolie in the Coolie agency. The girl was a minor and her husband was greatly perturbed over the incident. He lodged a complaint in my court and I asked the naib tahsildar to investigate the matter. He challaned the case. Miss Perill, an American missionary and a co-worker, Miss Cox, had to stand in the dock for a month or so during the hearing. They wrote to Mr Sale something against me and he forwarded the letter to me. I kept the letter with me and informed Mr Sale that I would run them for contempt of court. This frightened Mr Sale and he asked the missionaries to go to my house and apologise. The accused had to be discharged for lack of sufficient evidence against them, but the girl was restored to her husband. Pandit Ganga Ram Punetha and Kunwar Bahadur Singh Pal, two local lawyers, performed some purificatory rites and brought the girl back into the Hindu fold. While going out to preside over a meeting of the Soldiers' Board, they met me on the way and asked me if I would drink water from the hands of the girl. I did so. Mr Sale believed, I had a hand in the matter and wrote to the Government that I was in the habit of interfering with the customs of the people.

Mr Sale was very talkative and would flit from one subject to another. Ordinarily, I used to go about a mile or so out of the town to receive him when he came to my sub-division. One day I was held up and could not go out to receive him. I hurried and met him

near the dak bungalow, but by the time he had gone in. He was displeased, I could quite see. He often kept me engaged the whole day and up to midnight discussing the affairs of the sub-division.

We got piped water now. Pandit Prem Ballabh Kharkwal, a businessman, had donated Rs 14,000 for it. Shortly after, Pithoragarh was made a town area. I recommended Kunwar Bahadur Singh Pal for the presidentship of the Town Area Committee. He was a very honest, popular and godfearing man and a scion of the Rajwar family of Askot. He was also related to the Ranas of Nepal and spent freely on a good cause. As a lawyer, if a case was compromised after two or three hearings, he would return all the money he had taken from his client. Instead of supporting such a man, Mr Sale appointed one Har Kishan Sah, a resident of Almora town and a lawyer who had settled at Pithoragarh. His parting advice to me was to encourage Lala Har Kishan Sah in his practice. I told him to his face that I was not going to put my money on a wrong horse. I did not like Lala Har Kishan Sah.

Rang Bang

It was time to do something for the Bhotiyas. A very pernicious custom, known as Rang Bang, was prevalent among them. Each village had a house set apart for Rang Bang. Boys and girls assembled there to pass the night. They sang, danced and drank. This indiscriminate mixing of the sexes was very undesirable from a moral point of view. I also noticed that the incidence of syphilis was too high among the Bhotiyas. Every year, in the month of November, a

great fair was held at Jaul Jibi at the confluence of the Gori and Kali rivers. The Bhotiyas brought woollen goods, skins, fur, musk, curios and ponies for sale and merchants from Pithoragarh, Almora and Naini Tal ; cotton cloth, utensils, sugar, kerosene and other stuff. Almost all the gazetted officers of the district, the Commissioner of Kumaon and the Conservator of Forests attended the fair. A broad expanse of land above the rivers used to be dotted with tents.

I told Mr Sale that I would speak at the fair against the Rang Bang at a meeting convened by the Bhotiyas and requested him to support me. He promised to do so. I made a speech for full one hour and told the Bhotiyas that I would punish those taking part in Rang Bang. When I finished my speech, Mr Sale rose to speak. He said I was interfering with Bhotiya social customs and he would rather let them have some fun out of life. I was naturally disappointed. Far from supporting me, he asked the Rajwar of Askot to arrange a dance by some Bhotiya girls for him. He invited me to it. I refused to attend it, but Mr Sale sent two of his peons to fetch me. I had to go. I stayed there for a few minutes and returned to my camp saying I was feeling sleepy. Mr Sale himself was a puritan. At dinner, a bottle of liquor was always placed on his table, but it would go uncorked. He prided himself on it.

The first poison letter against me was now sent. A man from Odda township had purchased the landed property of a Rajput at a public auction. Sub-

sequently, the Rajput acquired money and wanted to get back his land. The Rajput was well connected and used his influence but the purchaser would not budge an inch. To avenge himself, he engaged a Dotiyal coolie, provided him with a box of cartridges and asked him to put it in the shop of the purchaser of the land. It was the usual practice of Dotiyal coolies to leave their loads in shops for safe custody. The shopkeeper had no suspicion. But the Rajput informed the police. At the same time, he sent an anonymous letter to Mr Sale saying that I had accepted a bribe of Rs 5,000 from the purchaser. I wrote to Mr Sale that the case be transferred from my court in view of the letter. He wrote back saying that he would not have the case transferred and that I should try it myself. I wrote back I would not be deflected by any other consideration except that of justice but there was yet time for him to revise his decision. He did not reply and I had to proceed with it. The shopkeeper was not found guilty and the case resulted in his acquittal. When he visited Pithoragarh next year, he called for the file of the case and studied it carefully. Holding the file in his hand, he jocularly told me that it was worth only Rs 1,000 and not Rs 5,000. I told him a deputy collector's price was higher.

The Soldiers' Board arranged a tea party for the Deputy Commissioner whenever he visited Pithoragarh. People were then very orthodox and separate tables were laid for Europeans and Indians. Mr Sale would ask the military personnel about their difficulties and promised to redress them. A gun licence was

the only thing which they needed most and they asked Mr Sale to be kind. Mr Sale said that he always granted a licence if the S.D.O. recommended it. "You are telling a lie," said a retired Army officer. "The S.D.O. does recommend it but you do not always accept his recommendation." He cited several cases.

Trek to Border

The District Board of Almora wanted some timber to repair a small bridge in Johar-Bhot. Timber is rather scarce at higher altitudes, but there was a grove in a village near Milam, the last border village. The villagers considered the grove sacred and did not want it cut. The patwari and the kanungo had failed to persuade the villagers. Mr Sale, therefore, asked me to visit the village and arrange it. I travelled in heavy rain. There were no stage bungalows beyond Askot and it took me four days to reach Milam from Askot. I had to fix my tent on wet land. I summoned all the adults of the village and explained to them that the bridge was for their benefit. They agreed to give the timber.

Milam was the highest point I had visited so far. At a height of 10,000 feet above sea level, one finds oneself completely detached from the world and its lures. A new vista opens before the mind's eye and a feeling of supreme happiness comes. One becomes part and parcel of nature. From Milam, I crossed the Gori Glacier on to Sandil Kund at an altitude of 14,000. There is a spring there which runs into a small lake. I experienced breathing difficulties but

some graziers, who tend goats at these heights, provided me with some chutney to keep off mountain sickness. Nature at such heights exhibits its highest art. The ground was under grass with circlets of wild flowers. It was an enchanting scene and one wanted to linger on as much as possible.

On my way back to Pithoragarh from Milam, the road was blocked by an avalanche over the Gori river. I was stranded there for two days. We had also run short of provisions. The Bhotiyas of Johar kindly constructed a temporary bridge for me to cross over to the other side. The Gori river was swollen. The bridge was rickety and a false step would have meant prompt death. I take my hat off to the Bhotiyas who passed several times over the makeshift bridge to carry my tent and luggage to the other side. The Bhotiyas were an adventurous people who crossed the Himalayan passes every year to trade in Tibet.

Land for Harijans

Gandhiji's concern for the welfare of the Harijans even roused the conscience of the administration. With this object in view, the Deputy Commissioner asked me to demarcate an area for 25 families of Harijans at 10 nalis (a land measure in the hills) per family out of a tract of reserved forest.

Mr Hari Prasad Tamta perhaps initiated this. I went to the spot with an amin but no correct measurements could be made on account of the density of the forest. I, therefore, made up my mind to err on the side of generosity and demarcated the land accordingly.

The result was that each family got an area ranging from 10 to 15 nalis. A few days later, an application was sent against me in which it was stated that I had allotted more than 10 nalis to each family. The Deputy Commissioner asked me to report. I said that accurate measurement were not possible in view of the thickness of the forest. This satisfied him.

Pithoragarh's richest people were the Maldars, Thakur Deb Singh and his son, Dan Singh. Their meteoric rise to wealth deserves mention here. Thakur Deb Singh was a merchant with a cloth shop. He used to deal in ghee which he purchased from Nepal at Jhula Ghat and supplied it to Ranikhet, Almora and Naini Tal. He also exported some of it to the plains through Tanakpur. The family collected enough money by the ghee trade and subsequently gave it up for forest contracts. By and by, they extended their operation as far as Nepal and Kashmir. The son, Dan Singh was a shrewd businessman. What he touched turned into gold. In a short span of 20 years or so, the family was able to collect considerable wealth. They owned a tea garden and dairy at Chaukori, near Berinag, where they constructed a hospital building for the benefit of the local population. In recognition of this, Thakur Deb Singh was made a Rai Bahadur. They had purchased a large tract of fertile land around Berinag from one Mr Roberts, a tea planter who retired to Kenya. They also own all the buildings at the Brewery, three miles below Naini Tal. They donated money for the establishment of a degree college at Naini Tal and contributed handsomely to some of the institutions at Pithoragarh.

Thakur Dan Singh was carried away by death in the prime of life, but the example he left behind will continue to inspire the Kumaonis whose record in business is lamentable. The Punetha family of Lohaghat, settled at Pithoragarh, also did astonishingly well in business, but Thakur Deb Singh and Dan Singh surpassed them all.

Askot Affairs

Rajwar Bikram Bahadur Pal was the Rajwar of Askot. His father had given some of the most flourishing villages in the taluqdari to his brothers for their maintenance. But the thought they had more than their due share. Thus there was heart burning between the brothers. Rajwar Bikram Bahadur Pal had little education. He had seen little of the world outside Askot and was stubborn and self-opinionated. "I am the lord of all I survey. There is none to dispute my right," was his favourite maxim. His forefathers lived a very simple life and believed in charity and hospitality. But the old times were gone and the so-called civilisation had been creeping slowly but steadily even into the remotest parts of the district. No wonder, Rajwar Bikram Bahadur Pal got his clothes stitched in London. He also added a sitting room to the old house of his ancestors and furnished it decently. He was not on good terms with his cousin, Kunwar Khadag Singh Pal, a former sub-divisional officer of Pithoragarh, who, he thought, was acting against his interests.

The Government held the Rajwar in great esteem and enhanced his prestige and status. There had been no proper settlement of land revenue in Askot.

At the last settlement, Mr Sherring, Deputy Commissioner of Almora, rode over his territory from one end to another and raised the land revenue by a few hundred rupees. The reason given for this small increase was that the Rajwar had to incur huge expenditure at the marriage of his daughters and sons.

Askot land is fertile and irrigation facilities exist in almost all the villages. In these circumstances, the peasantry was prosperous. As there had been no record operations for a very long time, the tenants had cultivated far more land than they were entitled to. Undoubtedly, there were as many as ten cesses which the tenants had to pay but they brought in an insignificant amount of money. The land revenue of Askot was about Rs 600 and the rent from the tenants came to Rs 10,000 only. The Rajwar was an honorary magistrate exercising the powers of a third class magistrate for his territory. He provided free food to outsiders who visited him at Askot. His wife, who was the daughter of a Bajang prince, a small principality within Nepal, had a religious bent of mind and contributed towards charity a considerable portion of her income.

On my first visit to Askot, I treated the Rajwar with utmost respect and accepted the provisions he sent me as a visiting S.D.O. But in course of time, our relations got strained. A man of his taluqa filed a complaint in my court against him under Section 498, I.P.C., alleging the Rajwar had taken away his young wife. I asked him to produce preliminary evidence and in the meantime informed Mr Baynes about it. He wrote back saying that Askot had a strategic importance as it bordered on Nepal on one side and Tibet on

the other and that I should keep the Rajwar in good humour. The complainant, perhaps under pressure, did not turn up and the case was dropped. Next time, the Rajwar's servant took away somebody's goat, evidently at the prompting of the master. I wrote to Mr Baynes again. He replied that the Rajwar was mule-headed and would not listen to anybody. But he neither wrote to him on the subject nor took any action. Thereupon, I informed Mr Baynes that I too would give the Rajwar a long rope. I, however, pointed out that condoning of oppression was likely to lay an axe at the root of the Raj. After these events, on subsequent visits to Askot, I refused to take the provisions which the Rajwar sent. The Rajwar felt slighted and asked Mr Sale to intercede on his behalf, but I told Mr Sale that it was a personal matter and I would not listen to him.

12. *The Finlay Era*

Mr Sale was transferred to Saharanpur and was succeeded by Mr W.W. Finlay. I had gone to Almora at the call of Mr Sale to bid him good-bye. When I returned, I found that the local doctor, Mr Bhawani Das Gangola, was under orders of transfer to the plains. Both Lala Har Kishan Sah and Dr Gangola were the residents of Almora and some hereditary enmity existed between the two. Taking advantage of my absence, Lala Har Kishan Sah, the chairman of the Town Area Committee, had drafted an application against the doctor and got it signed by hundreds of people.

I could not meet Mr Finlay as he was touring Lohaghat sub-division. I wrote to him that the transfer of a Government servant was an ordinary affair, but in this particular case it had been actuated by malice and done in my absence to lower me in the estimation of the people and that I would be grateful if the transfer could be postponed for a year. Mr Finlay immediately wrote a letter to Mr Proctor, Inspector-General of Hospitals, and sent a copy to me for information. The transfer was cancelled by telegram and postponed for a year.

When Mr Finlay came to Pithoragarh, I did not go out of the town, as was the usual practice, to receive him. I had heard he did not like it and preferred to meet the S.D.O. at the dak bungalow. As soon as he

reached the bungalow, Rai Sahib Pandit Prem Ballabh Kharkwal, who was waiting for him, presented him an otter skin, Mr Finlay told him that he never accepted anything from anybody, but in this case he would consult the S.D.O. and acceptance or rejection would depend upon his opinion. The Rai Sahib came running to me and informed me of the talk he had. After this, I was called in. When asked about the otter skin, I told him that it cost only annas six and that the Rai Sahib would feel hurt if it was not accepted. He inspected the tahsil and my court, paid a visit to the Soldiers' Club, but declined an invitation to tea there.

I soon had the chance to know the new Deputy Commissioner. I had convicted a man for making illicit liquor and selling it at the Mostamanu fair, a local show, held above Pithoragarh. This man belonged to an influential family and was particularly friendly to Miss Reid of the leper asylum, to Kunwar Khadag Singh Pal and to Thakur Deb Singh. These three persons formed a sort of conspiracy against me. It was decided that Miss Reid should speak something against me to Mr Finlay when he visited her at Chandak and the other two would support her when they went to meet Mr Finlay at Pithoragarh.

Mr Finlay called on Miss Reid and spent some time inspecting the leper asylum. Miss Reid started her game but Mr Finlay told her that an appeal lay against the conviction and he did not think the S.D.O. was dishonest. This silenced her. When he returned to Pithoragarh, Kunwar Khadag Singh Pal and Thakur Deb Singh went to see him. He called Kunwar Khadag Singh Pal first and during the course

of the conversation told him that he had a high opinion of the S.D.O. He asked him if he agreed. "I never met a deputy collector like him. He is very honest and straightforward," he agreed. Mr Finlay talked with Mr Pal in Hindustani so that Thakur Deb Singh could overhear him. Now came the turn of Thakur Deb Singh. No wonder, he supported Mr Pal in toto. Mr Finlay himself told me how he frustrated their designs. When he left Pithoragarh for Almora, I requested him for a transfer to Almora. He assured me he would certainly consider it.

A Tibetan Dacoit

One of my memories of Pithoragarh was the case of a Tibetan dacoit. The Tibetan had committed a robbery in the house of a British subject. He was arrested and sent with his sheep and horses to Pithoragarh. The witnesses for the prosecution were some Tibetans and summons for their appearance were sent through the Political Officer at Gyanima Mandi. The accused felt very unhappy. The climate of the place was too hot for him. Whenever I visited the lock-up, he would point out to me the distant passes and cry. I could not understand his language and there was no Bhotiya interpreter nearby to explain what he meant. He had been in the lock-up for six months. There was little hope of the witnesses coming from Tibet to depose against him. He had become pale and thin. I, therefore, released him on getting an assurance from him that the goods would be restored to their rightful owner. Mr Finlay was highly displeased with me. But the Tibetan did return the goods.

The relations between the Rajwar and myself had become further strained. He applied for the transfer of all his cases from my court. The Deputy Commissioner rejected the application and so did the Commissioner. He then appealed to the Board of Revenue. It also rejected it. In the meantime, I had been transferred to Almora and the question of the transfer of cases did not arise.

I left Pithoragarh with considerable relief. My first sub-division had been quite a headache. While leaving symbolically I picked up a stone on the heights of Chandak and hurled it in the direction of the town. That was a wish never to see the town again. It was 1937.

To Almora

Mr Finlay was the best I.C.S. officer I met. A Scotsman from Dundee, his absolute integrity particularly struck me. He would write his private letters with his private ink and pen and post them through his bearer and not through the peons whom he used only for Government work. He carried his raincoat himself though followed by a peon. He did not sleep till he had finished the day's work. He was very straightforward, just and sincere. There would have been a massacre of thousand of people in Benares Hindu University, on an earlier assignment, if he had not properly handled the situation. Mr Mason, in his book, *The Men who Ruled India* praises him for his equanimity, courage and decision. He was scrupulous, impartial and never made any distinction between the high and low. Once, while he was away on a long tour

of the border areas, he asked me to carry on his work and even delivered to me the keys of the confidential almirah. When I objected to this, he said confidential was the word of the *badmashes*. He was unconventional in many ways. Once a big man of Almora went to see him and complained against an officer. He went on writing what he said. When he rose to go, he asked him to sign the statement. The visitor was nonplussed, but it had the effect of reducing backbiting for which Almora was notorious.

While Mr Finlay was on tour, Mr Gwynne, the Election Commissioner, and Mr Ibbotson, Commissioner of Kumaon division, wrote to me to have more polling stations around areas where Thakur Jang Bahadur Singh, a candidate for the Legislative Assembly, had his supporters. He was standing against a Congress candidate. Mr Finlay had definitely told me not to do it, but I had to obey the two and carried out their wishes. When he returned, he was furious. I told him that he was an I.C.S. officer and could fight the I.C.S. people, but I could not do so, a mere P.C.S. man.

During his absence on the Bhot tour, I used to handle his correspondence with the Commissioner, Kumaon, and the U.P. Government. Mr Ibbotson considered it an unauthorised action on my part and wrote to Mr Finlay that I had the audacity to consider myself a Deputy Commissioner. Mr Finlay asked Mr Ibbotson not to misunderstand me, that he had asked me to do so and that he was very grateful to me for the extra work I had done.

Election officer

I was election officer of Almora district for the U.P. Legislative Assembly elections. I had to do this work in addition to the civil and criminal work transferred to my court by the S.D.M., Mr Grouse. I used to sit in the office sometimes up to 10 or 11 p.m. One night, Mr Finlay suddenly appeared and saw me at work with the election head clerk and others. The first thing he did after this was to return all the transferred cases to the S.D.M.'s court and asked me to send all correspondence on election matters to him. He himself used to type out the letters and send them on to me to sign. And he went on doing so till the elections were over.

He was considerate all the time. While at Berinag, where we both had gone for the opening of a hospital built by Thakur Deb Singh, one rainy night he dropped into my tent and offered to share his room at the stage bungalow with him. I also got a surprise support from him on my attitude to Rang Bang. During his tour of the Bhotiya area, he made enquiries about Rang Bang. An elder told him that the "badmash" deputy collector had made an attempt to suppress it, but it had been revived. He grew very angry, gave him a kick and explained that what the deputy collector had done was for their good and its revival was most undesirable. He himself told me the story.

Because of the elections, I had to visit his bungalow quite often. It was December. Snow had fallen and it was raining. After I had discussed some points,

he noticed I was shivering. He called his wife and asked her to put some firewood in the grate and kindle it. When it was done, he drew a chair to the fire, put a cushion in it and asked me to relax. He would not let me go till the rain had stopped. On the counting day, he volunteered to assist me, but as ill-luck would have it, his dog was bitten by a fox and he had to go to Ranikhet to get it treated for rabies.

There were 600 polling booths in the district and I had to find more than 3,000 men to conduct the elections. As far as practicable, I utilised the services of local people. Pandit Har Govind Pant, the Congress candidate for the Assembly, complained that I had appointed too many Rajputs as presiding officers, polling officers and clerks. Because of it, a large number of votes were likely to go to Thakur Jang Bahadur Singh in whose constituency Rajputs predominated. Out of the 3,000 persons recruited to conduct the elections, the number of Rajputs was just one-third and Pants, Pandes, Joshis and Tewaris formed the bulk. The list was placed before Mr Finlay. He told Pandit Har Govind Pant that such frivolous complaints did not fit in with his position and status.

An English I. C. S. officer, who was S. D. O., Ranikhet, had to help with the elections and he was appointed presiding officer for a place which he was to touch on his tour. He refused to work on the ground that I was nobody to order him to do so. There was no time to appoint another man in his place and I had to go to Vikiyasain, where he was camping, to persuade him to accept the assignment. I explained to him that I was a representative of the Deputy Commissioner for

the purpose of the elections and that I signed papers in this connection on behalf of the Deputy Commissioner. At last he agreed.

When Mr Finlay heard of it, he was angry. He demanded his explanation, recommended an adverse entry in his character roll and had him transferred from Ranikhet. The Congress won the elections and formed the first provincial Government.

While working as currency officer, Almora, one day when I had fever, I wrote to Mr Finlay that I would hand over the key of the currency chest to him on the road below Oakley House, where I lived, while he was on his way to the court. He came to my house, took the keys from me and did the currency work. After that, he went to my court and changed the dates of the cases. In the evening, he himself brought the keys to me.

Cancelled Invitation

The Governor visited Almora. He gave a dinner and invited Mr Grouse, an Anglo-Indian deputy collector, and myself, among others, to it. I had no dinner suit and was innocent of table manners. I brought these facts to the notice of Mr Finlay. He wrote to the private secretary of the Governor that I was orthodox and might be excused for not attending the dinner. The private secretary cancelled the invitation to Mr Grouse also. He did not want to create an impression that the Anglo-Indian deputy collector alone was invited.

Mr Finlay was a firm man and never hesitated to take drastic action even against English I. C. S.

officers when he found them in the wrong. Mr Acton, Commissioner of Kumaon division, had to refund a good quantity of gram which he had taken in excess of his legitimate share for his ponies. While on tour near the village of one of his peons, he learnt that the peon's son was ill. He had him brought from the village, took him in his car and drove to Almora, a distance of 50 or 60 miles, to put him in hospital. He loved the hills and the hillmen.

The Chief Secretary of the U.P. Government had by now asked him twice about my transfer. He replied that my health was not too good and that I had been doing useful work in the hills. He never talked to me on the subject though. When I broached it, he merely said there was some correspondence. The more I came in contact with him, the more I was reminded of the famous words of Shakespeare:

“and the elements

So mix'd in him that Nature might stand up

And say to the world, 'This was a man!' ”.

Thakur Deb Singh of Pithoragarh brought all the wool the Bhotiyas had imported from Tibet in the year 1935 or thereabout. There was a dispute about the price. The purchaser contended that the wool was of inferior quality and the price be reduced. To avoid litigation, I was appointed arbitrator with the consent of the parties. I took the statements of the witnesses and came to the conclusion that the purchaser should pay Rs. 10,000 to the Bhotiyas. The arbitration, however, fell through and the Bhotiyas filed a civil suit for Rs. 10,000 in the Deputy Commissioner's court. Mr Finlay again asked the parties to compro-

mise the case, but in vain. He, therefore, proceeded with it and passed a decree of Rs. 10,000 with costs against the purchaser. An appeal against this decree was filed in the Allahabad High Court. The High Court decided in favour of the purchaser and reduced the amount considerably. The Bhotiyas then appealed to the Privy Council where Mr Finlay's judgment was upheld. He always stood for compromise and was against litigation which he thought expensive and a source of bitterness and further trouble.

Mr Finlay went home on long leave. While seeing him off, he took me aside and said: "Do not go to the plains." I said I could not object to my transfer to the plains if the Government wanted it. He said if I ever went to the plains, I should well remember that (1) I should never call my reader to read documents written in Urdu at my house while writing judgments, (2) that I should not call on a vakil, and (3) that I should not be very friendly with other deputy collectors.

13. *Trouble With Congressmen*

Mr Dharma Vira succeeded Mr Finlay as Deputy Commissioner, Almora. He had been S.D.O., Bara-mandal, for a few years. Most of the people were familiar with him and hailed his advent to the charge of the district. He was Almora's first Indian Deputy Commissioner and mine as well. Mr Vira was a staunch nationalist. He never displayed unusual zeal in doing anything which would discredit the Congress. His manners were excellent and his innate courtesy and politeness endeared him to all who came in contact with him. He treated the deputy collectors as his equals and kept his drawing room open to them.

I soon had trouble with the local Congressmen. As Additional Deputy Collector, I had the misfortune to try a case in which Pandit Rudra Datta Bhatt, one of the leading Congressmen of Almora, was involved. He was a well-to-do man and the Congressmen who came from outside generally stayed with him and enjoyed his hospitality. He had encroached upon some Government land and the District Engineer had recommended his prosecution. The case was transferred to my court. I found him guilty and sentenced him to pay a fine of Rs. 50. On appeal, Mr Vira upheld my judgment.

Mr Bhatt, however, nursed a grouse against me

and wrote an article in the *Shakti* of Almora suggesting I be transferred to Jhansi. I brought this article to the notice of Mr Vira but he merely said that I should let the dogs bark and ignore them. Mr Ibbotson, Commissioner of Kumaon, had the same idea about the article. Jhansi was supposed to be the worst posting in U.P.

In the meantime, I had some misunderstanding with Mr Vira also. Mr Niblett, an Anglo-Indian deputy collector, had detected illicit liquor distillation in the local Gorkha lines. A Gorkha was prosecuted under the Excise Act. Although Mr Vira had no interest in the case, he called me, at the instance of Mr Niblett, and asked me to sentence the man to six months' imprisonment. No Deputy Commissioner had so far interfered with my judicial work and I was surprised that he should have talked that way. I expressed my inability to comply with his wishes and requested him to transfer the case from my court. He did not do it. I fined the accused Rs. 100 only. Mr Vira was angry and remarked that I was more fit to be a judicial officer than an executive one.

U. P. had a Congress Government now and Pandit Govind Ballabh Pant became the Premier. Pandit Badri Datta Pande, a bold and fearless Congressman and right-hand man of Pandit Pant, visited the Premier at Naini Tal at the instance of Pandit Rudra Datta Bhatt and spoke to him that I should be transferred to the plains in midsummer. The visit was also prompted by an unfortunate incident. Pandit Badri Datta Pande had come to give evidence in my court in favour of a tenant of his own brother, a plain-

tiff in the case. Pandit Badri Datta Pande was an M.L.A. and I treated him with the utmost courtesy by giving him a chair on the dais by my side. But he would evade answering questions put to him. I requested him to answer the questions directly. The vakil for the plaintiff said that he would like to direct my attention towards the "boorish" behaviour of the witness. I requested Pandit Badri Datta Pande again and again to answer to the point, but to no purpose. Then I had to use some harsh words and he came to his senses. He forgot to mention the courtesy and repeated the harsh words to Pandit Pant when he met him.

Last Provocation

I soon provided the last provocation for the transfer. Mr Vira had asked me to meet him during lunch hour to discuss some official business with him. In the meantime, Mr Tewari, secretary of the District Congress Committee, entered the room, took a seat and started smoking. He blew smoke rings in the direction of Mr Vira, not once or twice but continuously. I was very annoyed with his manners and asked Mr Tewari to get out. Even then he did not realise that his conduct was rude and discourteous. I, therefore, got up and actually pushed him out of the room. His departing words were that I should pack my baggage and be ready for a transfer to the plains.

Mr Vira often used to ask me why I was against Congressmen. I told him that I could never be against this organisation which aimed at the emancipation of the country from the foreign yoke, but I was a servant of the people and it did not behove me to identify my-

self with a certain party. Mr Tewari and others were not sitting idle. Pandit Badri Datta Pande and other Congressmen again visited Nani Tal to press Pandit Pant about my transfer. I was transferred to Bijnor in midsummer to satisfy the wishes of a few Almora Congressmen. My health was most indifferent. I never forgave Pandit Pant for this transfer and decided never to see him. I never did.

14. The Sweltering Plains

I reached Bijnor in April 1939. I had written to Pandit Daya Nand Joshi, Treasury officer at Bijnor, to arrange a house for me. He could only get me a haunted house and informed me accordingly. I had no choice but to accept Ganga Bhawan. The very first night in the house, my wife and daughter, while sleeping out during the night, were bitten by a fox. In my immediate neighbourhood there lived a retired Civil Surgeon and I hurried to him for consultation. He advised me to send them for anti-rabies treatment to Meerut. I knew no one in Meerut. I picked up the Civil List and learnt that Mr Deep Chand Jain, whom I knew while he was the S.D.O. of Lohaghat, was there. I wired him immediately to send his son to the railway station to receive my wife and daughter and to take them to his house. He wired back immediately and made necessary arrangements for the treatment. They stayed in his house for about a month and I shall never forget his kindness.

The next day, I went to pay my respects to Mr S.S. Nehru, I.C.S., Collector of the district. I did not know his visiting hours. As soon as he received my card, he came out and showed me a small board on which the visiting hours had been mentioned. His behaviour struck me as rather queer. I told him he could

ask me to come the next day if he had no time that day. When he said nothing, I added that it would be my first and last visit to his bungalow unless called. I discovered I was not the only one who was aware of Mr Nehru's rough manners. Mr Fergusson was the Superintendent of Police at Bijnor at the time. The deputy collectors of the district never called on him and he brought pressure on Mr Nehru to compel them to visit him. Mr Nehru issued a letter asking the deputy collectors to call on him. They refused to do so and Mr Mahbub Alam, who was the district secretary of the Deputy Collectors' Association, referred the matter to the U.P. Government. The Government was of the opinion that the deputy collectors could not be compelled to call on the Superintendent of Police if he had not called on them.

It took me six weeks to dispose of a complicated criminal case. Mr Fergusson wrote to the Collector that I had taken six months to finish it. Mr Nehru demanded my explanation. I submitted the file and wrote that Mr Fergusson had told a "white lie". He did not like the expression and asked me to apologise. I wrote back saying that the expression fitted well to the case and that I did not understand where else it could be applied. I also said I would not apologise and he might report me to the Government for disobedience.

I then applied for 10 days' casual leave. Mr Nehru called me to his office. He did not have the courtesy to offer me a chair. I took a chair myself and made myself comfortable. He thought it as impertinence on my part, but said nothing. He told me that he had permitted me to leave the station during the

Christmas holidays, that I had not availed of the opportunity and had deprived one of my colleagues of the leave. He said he would refuse me the casual leave. I told him casual leave was a gift and if he did not want to grant it, I would abide by his decision. He refused the leave and I went away. After I had gone, he sent his peon to call me back. I went back to my old chair. He said I would curse him if he did not grant me the leave. I replied I would not curse him and if I did, it would not be potent enough to harm him. He granted me the leave but began to argue again. I said it was not my habit to argue with my superiors.

I was in charge of the Chandpur sub-division. During Muharram, I visited it. There is a section of Muslims, who are against the display of *taziyas* and I think people holding this view were in a majority there. There was a fixed time for the *taziyas* to be taken out. Some of the Muslims came to me and wanted the time changed. I had orders to disallow it. I, therefore, informed them that I would promulgate prohibitory orders under Section 144, Cr. P.C., if they did not keep the time. There was no display of *taziyas* as a protest and I returned to Bijnor. Mr Nehru met me at the club and told me that I should have informed him of the developments. I said nothing untoward had happened in Chandpur and I had already sent a report to that effect.

The case work in the courts was not heavy, but I experienced considerable difficulty in deciding cases under the Agra Tenancy Act. We have only *hissedars*, *khaikars* and *sirtans* in the hills. The *hissedar* is the proprietor of the land and the *khaikar*, an occupancy

tenant who cannot be ejected from his holding so long as he pays his rent. A *sirtan*, however, is a tenant at will who can be ejected at the sweet will of the *hissedar* after the crop has been harvested. Under the Agra Tenancy Act, there were many classes of tenants. Though some amendments were made in the Act for the alleged benefit of the tenants, nothing substantial had been done to better their lot. The deputy collectors, however, generally favoured the tenants and saved them from the oppression of the zamindars to some extent. I managed the criminal work very well, indeed. The court room was always overcrowded with people and during the summer and rains, it was unbearably close and stuffy. The *pankha* in the afternoon seemed to belch fire. To avoid lassitude, I used to take light food in the morning. I also took to wearing shorts.

As I reached Bijnor, I received a letter from the secretary of the District Congress Committee saying it should be consulted off and on about general administration. I wrote back, a Government servant was the servant of the people and he could not identify himself with any particular party. A murder case of a ghastly nature came to my court. Some Congressmen had murdered a *chaukidar*, hacked him into pieces and scattered the bits over a field. Ten or twelve Congressmen in white caps and *khaddar* kurtas were in the dock. Babu Nemi Saran, a lawyer, was defending them. I casually remarked that this was the Congress, which would deliver the country from the foreign yoke. The lawyer objected to this remark in the open court, but while both of us were on our way home, he confessed that something was really rotten in the State of Denmark.

World War II

World War II had now started. After about nine months in Bijnor, Nagina sub-division was given to me on a deputy collector's transfer. It is a predominantly Muslim area and I could only raise a war loan of Rs. 9,000 while my allotted share was Rs. 15,000. The Collector told me that he would send Mr Bhagwant Singh, a deputy collector, to collect more money from my sub-division if I had no objection. I agreed but Mr Bhagwant Singh met with no success.

Mr Nehru had received orders to officiate as Commissioner of Benares division. He saw me going to the courts and called me to his bungalow. He gave me the news of his promotion and transfer and added that I had kept myself rather aloof. I told him I expected greater courtesy and politeness from him. He assured me he was very pleased with my work and behaviour and that I should not entertain any hard feelings. Mr Nehru's rough exterior created an unfavourable impression on those who came in contact with him. He was a great scientist and devoted some of his time every day making various experiments. He knew as many as 13 languages.

Mr Nehru was succeeded by Khan Bahadur Mohammed Mustafa Khan who belonged to a very old family of Muslims in Jaunpur. He was a cultured Muslim with perfect manners and had no prejudice against anybody on the basis of caste or creed. Deputy collectors were always welcome to his bungalow. I could not stir out in the heat without discomfort, had never ridden a cycle and had no means to buy a car. I,

therefore, requested him that my few visits may not be construed as discourtesy. He told me if he wanted me, he himself would call me and that I should never visit his bungalow unless called.

Graft in Court

There were two more criminal cases which I must mention. A poor villager had some revenue case in the court of Mr Bhagwant Singh, deputy collector. The villager had gone to the house of his reader to offer him some money, but the latter had gone to the court. The villager thought it would be right if he paid the money there. He gave Rs. 5 to the reader in full view of Mr Bhagwant Singh. The reader brought this fact to the notice of Mr Bhagwant Singh and the villager was caught redhanded. Mr Bhagwant Singh took the statements of the reader and of others present in the court and sent the case to the Collector. The Collector sent it to my court for trial.

The villager had nothing on except a loin cloth. His sunburnt back and cracked feet presented a scene of abject poverty. When I recorded his statement, he told me he used to give a few rupees to the reader at his house and the only fault he had committed was that he had given him Rs. 5 in the open court. I did not know how to punish this man. The offence was serious and yet the accused did not realise its gravity. I sentenced him to undergo one day's imprisonment till the rising of the court and in addition to a fine of Rs. 5. As an extenuating circumstance, I wrote in the judgment, it was a timehonoured practice and an open secret. The Collector went through the judgment and

objected to the expression "time honoured practice". He admitted that the practice existed, but I should not have written this in the judgment.

Another case was of a sub-inspector of police who pulled out some cartridges out of the chaff heap of a poor tenant. The tenant was not on good terms with the zamindar and the poor villager was hauled up under the Arms Act. He had no gun and the cartridges could be planted there by some designing person. I acquitted him. There was an uproar in the police circles. Mr Tipson, Assistant Superintendent of Police, whom I knew at Nani Tal, met me at the club and told me that the acquittal was wrong and that he would take further steps to ensure conviction. I told him he could make an enquiry on the spot and inform me. He found out that the case was a concocted one and thanked me for what I had done. At Bijnor, I discovered that most of the deputy collectors played into the hands of the police and convicted people on flimsy evidence. The Collector himself warned me that the police had an upper hand and if I resorted to frequent acquittals in police cases, they might play some mischief even with me.

A Skipped Dinner

Mr P. Mason (Senior), who was a Deputy Commissioner of Garhwal for years, came to Bijnor on a tour of inspection as the Commissioner of Rohilkhand division. Each deputy collector was allotted 15 minutes for the interview. When my turn came and when he knew that I was a Garhwali, he met me as if I was his own kith and kin. He made detailed enquiries about the leading families of Garhwal and even remembered a

a small girl, who had played a part in the Ram Lila during his term as Deputy Commissioner, Garhwal. Old members of the I.C.S. generally acquired a liking for the people of the district where they served and often came forward to help them if they could. Mr Islam Nabi Khan, the Collector, arranged a dinner in honour of the Commissioner's visit. Pandit Daya Nand Joshi and I did not attend the dinner. During the dinner, our absence was marked, but Mr Mason graciously remarked that both of us would have been excommunicated if we had participated in the dinner and that he (the Collector) should not mind our absence.

Pandit Ansuya Prasad Ghildiyal, a man of my own district, was the Assistant Sessions Judge of Bijnor and criminal cases were committed to his court. While sending his judgments to me, his clerk would write, "Copy forwarded to Govind Ram Kala for information," without using Mr. I brought this discourtesy to the notice of Mr Ghildiyal but to no purpose. Then I had to approach the Collector. He wrote to Mr Ghildiyal to send the clerk concerned to my court to apologise. This was done.


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*15. Back to the Hills*  
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The Askotland settlement took me out of Bijnor. I was a settlement expert by now having handled operations in Garhwal and Tarai-Bhabar. While the proposals were afoot, Mr Vira, Deputy Commissioner of Almora, recommended Thakur Pratap Singh, a tahsildar, for appointment as A.R.O. and A.S.O. at Askot. The Commissioner, on the other hand, recommended Thakur Jagat Singh on the ground of wider experience. But a senior member of the Board of Revenue, Mr Marsh Smith, thought otherwise. At Haldwani, he had the chance to see the settlement report I had written as A.S.O., Bhabar, in 1924 or thereabout. He asked the Commissioner to find out where I was. The Commissioner said that I was at Bijnor. He sanctioned my appointment then and there. Mr Ibbotson, Commissioner of Kumaon, informed me at Bijnor that I should be ready to proceed to Askot. He well knew that my relations with Rajwar Bikram Bahadur Pal were strained. I was surprised at the announcement. I wrote in my reply that in view of our strained relationship, it would not be advisable for me to accept the offer. The tenants of Askot had asked for me and the Rajwar also wrote to the Commissioner that he had no objection to my appointment. He told the Commissioner that though we both were not on good terms, he considered his

interests safe in my hands.

I did not like to go back to Almora district on account of the shabby treatment the Congress Government had meted out to me there and I requested the Collector of Bijnor to write to the Government that I was not in a fit state of health and that another man be appointed in my place. The Government wrote back that no other hillman with my settlement experience was available and that I must go. Rajwar Bikram Bahadur Pal had, in the meantime, expired after a short illness. His premature death was a great disturbing factor in the *ilaga*. His son was a minor and his widow went in seclusion after his death. The brothers of the Rajwar were extremely jealous of him and withheld their co-operation to the family when it was needed most.

Meeting with Rani

As soon as I reached Askot, the Rani sent for me and said with tears in her eyes: "The Rajwar died in the prime of life. His relations with you were rather strained. But he told me shortly before his death that you would look after the interests of the minor Rajwar and that she need not entertain any fear on that account". I assured her that justice alone would guide me in my work and I would safeguard the interests of the family keeping in view the welfare of the tenants.

The Rajwar of Askot and his brothers were connected with the ruling Rana families of Nepal and other prominent families of Rajputs in U.P. and Bihar. The Pals of Askot, in spite of their poor means, were held in great esteem on account of their lineage. Rajwar Bikram Bahadur Pal once told me that Rana Jang

Bahadur of Nepal was willing to cede the *pargana* of Doti in lieu of a bride from the Rajwar family, but his grandfather rejected the offer with contempt. Since then, as they had fallen on evil days, they had given away their daughters to the Rana families in marriage and had even prided themselves on it.

After the death of the Rajwar, Askot was administered by the Court of Wards. Mr Vira became the manager and a *sarbarakar* was appointed for the collection of rent and revenue. This *sarbarakar* acted as a representative of the minor Rajwar in disputes that arose in the course of the record and settlement operations. Askot was the granary of the border. Agriculture was more profitable here than elsewhere, for the Bhotiyas, the next-door neighbours, offered handsome price for the grain which was exported to Tibet on their pack goats.

At the last settlement, the population of Askot was small and agricultural land plentiful. The tenants, therefore, paid a light rent. The cultivated area had expanded year after year. The tenants earned more but the Rajwar realised only a fixed rent. The records of the *taluqa* were in a very bad condition on account of the incorporation of numerous changes effected during the course of a century. A record and settlement operation, therefore, was absolutely necessary. The income of the Rajwar did not exceed Rs 10,000 a year. It was the tenant, who had cried for record and settlement operations, little realising that he had brought far more land under the plough and would be required to pay more rent. But the Congressmen those days found injustice where nothing existed. They in-

cited the tenants against the Rajwar and his imposts, which were nominal.

The operations lasted over a period of nine months. I had engaged experienced *amins* from Garhwal and Almora to prepare the maps and records. Our work was going fast enough but the Government wanted to finish the operations early. To expedite matters, the Deputy Commissioner sent patwari candidates to do the work of *amins*. They had no previous experience and the maps of the villages they surveyed left much to be desired. I felt the Government had sacrificed efficiency for economy.

During the course of the settlement operations, Mr. Vivian, Commissioner of Kumaon division, came to the Jaul Jibi fair in November. In respect of the land which the Rajwar's brothers held by way of maintenance, the Commissioner asked me to convert the grain rent into cash rent. I told him it was at the option of the *hissedars* to charge cash or grain in Kumaon and that grain rent could not be converted into cash rent. The Commissioner took exception to my argument and told me that I was thinking in a wrong direction. Mr. Vira, Settlement Officer, was present at the meeting. Next morning, the Commissioner called me and told me that I had argued correctly and that grain rent would continue to be paid to the Rajwar's brothers as hitherto. If the Commissioner's suggestion had been carried out, the poor brothers of the Rajwar would have suffered considerable hardship.

I protected the rights of the Bhotiyas. These generally migrated to warmer climes in winter and

the Rajwar used to allot land to them every year to put up their tents for a *nazarana*. They were called *kheras* by the Bhotiyas. I had this land demarcated in their name at a nominal rent. This saved them from further botheration and they could camp on the fixed sites without the permission of the Rajwar. As a result of the settlement operations, the Rajwar's rent collections rose to Rs 35,000 a year. He had to pay a revenue of Rs 6,000 to the Government. Since his *malikana* from the *khaikars* came to about Rs 6,000, he had nothing extra to pay. The most fertile pieces of irrigated level land were assessed at Re 1 for each 20 *nalis*. The other rates were annas 8, 7, 6 and 5 for the same area in accordance with the condition of the land.

Tea with Bhotiyas

In between the settlement operations, I found time for the Bhotiyas. The Christian missionaries had penetrated deep into the remotest Bhotiya regions and had already converted some. The Bhotiya people were much alarmed and asked me to do something to check their activities. The Bhotiyas of Johar are definitely Rajputs, while the other Bhotiyas are of mixed Rajput and Mongoloid blood. They are Hindus for all practical purposes, but the caste Hindus treated them as untouchables, probably because they intermarried with the Tibetans. The Christian missionaries took advantage of this and gradually spread their net. Thakur Nand Ram Garbyal of Garbyang, an influential Bhotiya trader, visited me at the Jaul Jibi fair and asked me to do something dramatic to

eradicate this untouchability. I invited the leading Bhotiyas to my camp, had tea prepared and seated them on the same carpet on which I was sitting. Tea was served to all. The local people raised a hue and cry, but they had not the courage to excommunicate me, a Brahmin. Kunwar Bahadur Singh Pal and Pandit Ganga Ram Punetha, two distinguished lawyers of Pithoragarh, supported me.

Lohaghat Days

The settlement and record operations told badly on my health. I, therefore, requested Mr Vira to write to the Commissioner to post me to some hill station. I got orders to go to Lohaghat, a sub-division in Almora district. Though the main 1942 movement was still away, even in a backward place like Lohaghat there was trouble. I had received orders to arrest all the presidents of the mandal Congress committees. This was done quickly. The Lohaghat lock-up was full of Congressmen. Many of the arrested men demanded that they be allowed to cook their food, others asked for permission to bathe in the stream nearby. I allowed as many concessions as I could, but their main object was to embarrass the authorities in every possible manner. Those sentenced would not stir and would give a lot of trouble to the peons who had to escort them to Almora Jail, five marches away.

Soon I received a telegram saying that the forest bungalow at Debidhura had been burnt. I proceeded immediately to the spot and found that half the bungalow and half the furniture had been saved by

the local people. They scaled the walls of the burning bungalow and extinguished the fire by bringing water from a spring below the rock temple. The circle patwari and the kanungo had investigated the case. They arrested a dak runner. The case was heard at Lohaghat and committed to the Court of Sessions, which gave the accused the benefit of doubt and acquitted him.

Mr Donaldson, my new Deputy Commissioner, wrote to me to recommend the imposition of a collective fine on the local people. I asked Kunwar Jodh Singh, tahsildar, to submit a list of the families which resided in the locality and sent it on to the Deputy Commissioner with the remarks that I was unable to recommend the imposition of such a fine on people who had made every possible effort to save half the bungalow and half the furniture. The Deputy Commissioner referred the matter to the Commissioner, who agreed with me.

The World War II was now at a critical stage. The Government was eager to collect war loans on a gigantic scale. In a poor sub-division like Lohaghat, there was little scope for a large collection. The English and Anglo-Indian residents of Abbot Mount, three miles away, came to my rescue. They contributed handsomely towards the war loan fund and my difficulty was solved in a very short time. They also purchased 40 Christmas cards at Rs 10 each. I am grateful to a missionary lady for collecting Rs 400.

Abbot Mount

The picturesque colony of Abbot Mount is

named after Mr Abbot, the proprietor. He was a zamindar in Jhansi and the first man to settle at Abbot Mount. The colony commands a glorious view of the snows. By and by, Mr Abbot persuaded some retired Anglo-Indians and Englishmen to settle there, offering them land for orchards. The settlers lived there from April to October and migrated to the plains early in November. They built beautiful bungalows on the slopes and planted apple orchards. But they got all their supplies from Tanakpur, the railhead, 50 miles away. Hence, life was very expensive. The income from the fruit was not enough and there were no facilities for educating the children. The result was that the residents began to leave the colony and sell their bungalows cheap. Most of them left for Australia, where the white man has more opportunities.

Mr Abbot celebrated his birthday with great pomp and show. He would invite the leading people of Lohaghat and the surrounding villages and serve them tea and sweets. The residents of Abbot Mount were of course the principal guests and they left no stone unturned to make it most entertaining. The S.D.O. at Lohaghat presided over the function. Since the residents of the colony were most obliging, I did my utmost to help them in every possible way in a period of shortages.

Mayawati

Close by was Mayawati, the hill headquarters of Ram Krishna Mission. Like Abbot Mount, it too is in a picturesque setting. The swamis of the mission go there to recoup their health. *Prabuddha Bharat*,

the principal journal of the mission, was once edited from there. A retired English army officer had donated all his bungalows and his tea estate to Swami Vivekananda. He converted it into an ashram. A very big modern hospital is run here by the mission for the good of the poor peasantry. People go to it from hundreds of miles. A fairly large library is maintained. The library and the friendship of the swamis made my life bearable.

Swami Pabitrnanand, author of *Disciples of Ram Krishna Paramhansa* and *Commonsense in Yoga*, was the president of the ashram. I was almost a constant visitor to it on Sundays and other holidays. The swamis practised meditation and studied religious books, but each had to do some allotted task to run the establishment. They maintained a fruit and vegetable garden, ran a dairy for the sick in hospital and owned a gun—to shoot panthers if they lifted their cattle.

The hospitality of the ashram is proverbial. They entertain all visitors, for to them every visitor is Narayan, God in human form. They invited Mr Donaldson, Deputy Commissioner of Almora, and myself to tea, when the former had come to Lohaghat sub-division during a tour. They served many Bengali sweets and fruits from the garden. The Deputy Commissioner did full justice to them. While on our way back home, he told me that he would love the idea of becoming a swami with so many nice things to eat. I told him that the swamis had made the things for a guest and they generally lived on very ordinary fare—chapatis, dal and a vegetable.

We used to hold an annual fruit and vegetable

show at Lohaghat. The English and Anglo-Indian residents of Lohaghat and Abbot Mount participated in it with enthusiasm and made it a success. Several prizes were offered. The swamis of Mayawati nearly always got a prize for the biggest cauliflower during my tenure. The residents of Abbot Mount had the biggest share of the prizes though.

1942 Tempers

While the Quit India movement was at its zenith in 1942, an English military officer on his way to Lohaghat walked in with a complaint. It was a cold day and he wanted to warm himself by a fire which a shopkeeper of Kheti Khan had lit in his shop. But the shopkeeper would not permit him to enter his shop commenting that no Englishman would let an Indian stand in his compound, not to speak of his bungalow. How did he dare to enter the shop? The military officer felt insulted. He told me what had happened and asked me to take some action. I said as the shopkeeper had not committed any offence, I could not proceed against him. But he was not convinced. He wrote to the Deputy Commissioner. The latter agreed with me and wrote to the military officer accordingly. There was an awakening among the masses and the general awe of the Englishman had disappeared.

The Government decided to overawe the backward people inhabiting Lohaghat and Pithoragarh sub-divisions and sent a police detachment on a route march. The men were under the command of a captain named Andrews. I am not quite sure of the

name. There was Mr Bill, an I.C.S. officer, with him. I went to receive them near Sukhi Dang and had a long frank talk with Mr Bill on the political situation. I also told him all the Government servants had been doing their duty honestly and faithfully and would continue to do so.

The detachment reached Champawat the next day and camped at Goril Chaur, a level expanse of land below the Champawat fort. Hillmen wear coloured and white caps resembling Gandhi caps. The captain and the I.C.S. officer mistook them for Gandhi caps. With their orders, the caps were removed from the heads of the wearers and there were instances of assault as well. The captain and Mr Bill had no business to behave in this way. They should have at least consulted me before taking action. I visited the captain and told him plainly that the throwing away of the caps and beating up of the wearers was unjustified and it must stop immediately. At the same time, I wrote a strong letter about the incident to the Deputy Commissioner asking him to warn the captain against such activities. The Deputy Commissioner took immediate action and there were no further incidents.

The detachment reached Lohaghat a day ahead of me as I had to try some cases at Champawat. Mr Bill by the time had the audacity to confiscate the arms of some local people who stood by the Government at least outwardly. I was very much annoyed. Next day, when I reached Lohaghat, I demanded his explanation for taking action without consulting me. He said, he had received information about their

anti-Government leanings. I took the confiscated guns from Mr Bill and restored them to the owners. I brought these activities of Mr Bill to the notice of the Deputy Commissioner as well.

The next night, Mr Bill came to me at midnight and informed me that some prominent Congressmen of Almora, who had been preaching disaffection against the Government, were ready to cross the Kali river into Nepal to evade arrest. I had already issued strict orders to the patwaris and kanungos concerned to prevent Congressmen from crossing the Kali and to arrest them. The principal fords and ferries were being guarded. I do not understand the wisdom of those who suggested the route march through the two sub-divisions of Lohaghat and Pithoragarh. Far from subduing the people, it accelerated the pace of the movement.

I had also to look after the recruitment of soldiers to the army. Parties of recruiting officers visited Lohaghat frequently and it was the duty of the S.D.O. to produce some recruits at each halt. Chura Mani, a retired soldier of Lohaghat, was a big help. He played on the *hurka* (a small drum) singing his own compositions which inspired the villagers to join the army. The burden of one song was that the soldier would become a jamadar or a subedar in course of time and that his wife would be loaded with gold ornaments. The Deputy Commissioner asked me to recommend a man with the best recruitment record for a reward and I recommended Chura Mani. He got Rs 150 a year for his services. The English captain, who was in overall charge of the recruiting, did not want

Chura Mani to get the reward. He asked me why I had recommended him. I told him he had no business to ask me such a question. I did not belong to his department, and it was a question between the Deputy Commissioner and myself. His one objection was that Chura Mani drank. He himself was drunk at the time and I drew his attention to this fact. He started saying something] against Chura Mani in abusive language. I took serious exception. I told him that he was talking to a magistrate who could have him arrested then and there. He came to his senses and offered me a drink. I said I did not drink. Then he offered me a cup of tea. I informed him that caste restrictions prevented me from taking it.

The superior airs were, I noticed, not limited to Englishmen alone. A Yugoslav emigre writer had come to Lohaghat with a married woman. They were staying with one Mrs Kevenah. I received a telegram from the Bombay Government to enquire if the two were at Lohaghat. Mrs Kevenah informed me that they shared the same room. When I asked the two if it was a fact, both of them flared up and asked me how dare I ask such a question. I had a pair of handcuffs ready to arrest them and showed them the telegram. They were apologetic. I directed them to leave Lohaghat the next day and informed the Bombay Government accordingly.

There is a curious arrangement in this sub-division. The tahsil is situated at Champawat, six miles away from Lohaghat where the S.D.O. holds his court. Champawat was once the capital of the

Chand Rajas and their fort is still there. There is a dak bungalow above the fort and I visited it almost every month to write judgments in the calm and quiet atmosphere of the place.

About four miles from Champawat was an estate of the Raja of Nahan, called Chherapani. A former tea estate, it had nice stands of deodar and considerable open space for planting orchards. The Government of India purchased it for the benefit of the Ceylonese Christian orphans. They had just started work and I do hope they had converted it by now into a smiling colony. As far as I recollect, there was plenty of water all over the place. The crying need of the place was a school and a small bazaar. The residents worked hard. I visited the colony once while on tour. The smiling faces of the boys and girls captivated my heart. I recommended gun licences to the colonisers freely and they appreciated the efforts I made for their welfare.

Stranded Englishman

I well remember Lohaghat for the case of the stranded English hermit. Mr Baker had come to Kumaon with a friend of his who wanted to study the Bhotiyas for an anthropological work. The friend died and Mr Baker was stranded at Lohaghat. For some years he received Rs 100 a month from his investments in America, where he had worked as an accountant. Over the years, the interest dwindled to Rs 50 a month and finally to Rs 30.

He lived alone by a stream, a mile out of town, doing his own cooking and washing. He never

could understand the language of the people and the shopkeepers sold him provisions at a higher price than they ordinarily charged from the hillman. He paid Rs 10 a month for the one-room cottage. He bought his firewood from village women. I am sure he led a very hard life. He took his commode to the stream to clean and the local people thought he was of unsound mind. He immediately attracted me. He was too self-respecting to accept help from any quarter. The cottage he lived in belonged to Mr Matcher, a man in affluent circumstances, who could have waived the rent if asked. Mr Baker did not approve of the suggestion and always refused any help point blank.

I had a vegetable garden at Lohaghat which yielded vegetables enough and to spare and I used to send him some almost every week. He accepted them but always sent word through my man not to send more in future. To keep his self-respect, I generally took a few tomatoes from his vegetable patch whenever I visited him and he used to feel very happy. I also undertook to get his shopping done, of course at his own expense.

Once while on my way back from Abbot Mount, where I had gone to preside over the birthday celebrations of Mr Abbot, I passed by Mr Baker's cottage and put 10 apples on his table for his use. Those were some of the apples Mr Abbot had given me. I could persuade him to accept them with great difficulty. He would not mix with other Anglo-Indians and Englishmen of the place on account of his inability to return the hospitality they would extend. During Christmas week, he would put on a black woollen

coat and a pair of woollen trousers, the best he had, and take me to the top of the Lohaghat hill for a view of the Himalayas. He had a small library which he utilised to his fullest advantage.

While under orders of transfer to Almôra, I sold him all the provisions I had at a nominal price fully assuring him all the time that I had taken the full price for them. A few months later, he returned to England. A sister had sent him 500 pounds.

Mr Baker was 65. He was used to a better way of life, but he fought the circumstances with a grim determination.

Debidhura Riot

I got word that there would be trouble at the Debidhura fair. It is a funny fair notorious for stone-pelting. Any two parties can do it here without fear of the law. Many leading Congressmen had gathered there to preach the gospel of disobedience. Some of the hotheads held a secret meeting and decided to push the S.D.O. on duty, thrash the tahsildar and beat up the patwari and kanungo with shoes and burn the Government records. We fixed our tents near the temple and passed a sleepless night fearing arson and violence. The fair committee members came to me and asked me to take steps to ensure peaceful conditions at the fair. It was decided that the Congressmen be allowed to shout slogans, but not be permitted to speak against the Government servants. The Congressmen agreed to it but soon broke the pledge and made a speech urging the people to burn the records of the patwaris and kanungos who were attending the

fair. I rose to the occasion, put my hand on the shoulder of the speaker and told him that he was under arrest. As I was taking him to the dak bungalow to be handcuffed, the Congressmen surrounded me to free the arrested man. The crowd got menacing. But as good luck would have it, a posse of military personnel, who had been recruiting people for the Army, arrived. Hearing of the danger I was in, they turned to my assistance. The crowd disappeared. The fair dragged on.

On hearing of the trouble at the fair, the Deputy Commissioner sent me a special messenger with a letter saying that Tommies would be sent to Debidhura to arrest the trouble creators. I thought it would be a bad day if the Tommies were allowed to cross into Lohaghat sub-division. They had done many excesses elsewhere. I wrote to Mr I. Khan, who was in charge of the troops, that I did not need them, and that they should not be sent to my sub-division. That very day, I dropped the news that the Tommies would be there the next day. That night we feared more trouble. Some villagers, who had gun licences, came to me with their guns to defend the camp. But such people could not be relied upon. Luckily, nothing untoward happened that night. Next morning, I sent one of my peons running through the temporary bazaar. He had been asked to tell the people that he was going to receive the Tommies and that the S. D. O. would soon follow him. I followed him, as arranged. The moment the news spread that troops were on way, almost all Congressmen ran away and hid themselves in the forest. One Almora wakil, who was a resident of those

parts, was amiably surprised when he learnt of the trick I had played on the Congressmen. After the fair, I removed my camp to Dhunaghat and thanked God for His mercy and kindness.

An Infanticide

In the court sometimes one found oneself in a fix. Humanity and law at least clashed in one case. I decided for humanity. The case which struck me as particularly unfortunate was that of a widow. She had three daughters with no one to look after them. An illegitimate child was born to her and she concealed the foetus within a dungheap in the courtyard of her house. Someone in the village reported the matter to the patwari and the foetus was recovered. The medical officer certified that the child was born alive and the case against her was proved to the hilt. The question of punishment agitated my mind for a considerable time. According to the Penal Code, the offence was a serious one and deserved deterrent punishment. She had destroyed a human life to conceal her shame. Another concern was what would be the condition of the girls if the widow was sentenced for two years or so. It was the usual punishment. In that case, I would be guilty of subjecting the girls to utmost misery, neglect, starvation and even death. I consulted the pleaders in the court and they seemed to sympathise with me. The seven pleaders offered to pay Rs 5 each if I fined her. I added an equal amount as my share. She was fined Rs 40 with a day's imprisonment till the rising of the court. The police considered it too light

a punishment, but I had given full reasons in my judgment. Luckily, no effort was made to file an appeal for the enhancement of the sentence.

Baba of Jhumma

If Lohaghat had a Thoreau in Baker, it had a *yogi* in the Baba of Jhumma. He was an educated Bengali, well versed in the scriptures and had several books on moral subjects to his credit. He built a house on a hill top, about three miles from Lohaghat and used to meditate sitting on a tiger skin in an underground pit. The local people held him in high esteem and often visited him.

The *sadhu* supped off silver. He belonged to a rich family and his brother sent him a handsome allowance every month out of the income of the family estate. The silver was stolen by his servant. I heard about it, not from the swami, but from someone who had gone to visit him. I visited his house without delay and had the silver restored to him. I, however, warned him that as he lived a lonely life, it was not safe for him to keep valuables. He said he was used to them since his childhood. Such is the force of habit which grows into a character. An atmosphere of peace pervaded the hermitage. His smiling face and his generally cheerful mien, together with his courtesy and hospitality, endeared him to everyone. Everybody in the locality believed he had occult powers, but he never demonstrated them. The display of *yogic* powers, far from contributing to spiritual progress, leads to a degeneration of the *yogi*.

For years we had been after a temple thief. A


harijan had committed several thefts in many temples in Nepal and the adjoining British territory. He stole temple gold and silver and lived a luxurious life. The police at last arrested him with great difficulty for he would cross over to Nepal the moment he got scent of the police. Several bars of silver and some gold ornaments were recovered from his house. He was a habitual offender and was sentenced to undergo the stiffest punishment I could inflict.

A tahsil *jamadar* and three peons took him to Almora jail. There were no lock-ups on the way to house prisoners during the night and the escort as well as the prisoners stayed in roadside shops to pass the night. This man broke open the door of the shop at night and made good his escape while the tired peons were soundly asleep. He made his way to a water mill and had his handcuffs and fetters rubbed off on the grinding stone. Luckily, a villager, who had seen him going with the escort the previous day, saw him. He informed the *malguzar* who had him arrested and sent to Lohaghat.

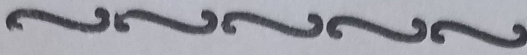
The Deputy Commissioner registered a case against the escort and asked my opinion on it. I wrote that in the absence of lock-ups on the way, it was hardly fair to prosecute the peons who had to walk 10 or 12 miles during the day with the prisoner and that it was not unnatural that they felt tired and slept at night. I, however, recommended that an entry be made in their character rolls for neglect of duty. The *jamadar* was on the verge of retirement and would have forfeited his pension if he were prosecuted.

Instructions were given to me to start a *Shilpakar*

colony in Lohaghat like the one in Pithoragarh. Mr Donaldson particularly asked me to be present at the distribution of the land. He feared the leaders of the *Shilpakars* and the tahsildar would make money if the task was entrusted to them. I had sent a telegram to Mr Hari Prasad Tamta to present himself with the *Shilpakars* on a particular day at Champawat and to meet me there. But a washbasin fell on my right leg and caused a wound. The wound, despite medical attention, began festering and I could not walk to Champawat. I wrote to the tahsildar now to go ahead and distribute the land. This done, I forwarded the tahsildar's report to the Deputy Commissioner. He was very annoyed and never forgave me. He always thought it was intentional. The wound in my leg got worse. I was now alarmed. I wrote to the Deputy Commissioner either to grant me leave or transfer me to Almora for better medical aid.



16. *Almora Again*



I was transferred to Almora in 1944. As the wound in my leg would not heal, I rented a house just below the courts to enable me to walk there without much exertion. Mr F. N. Croft, District and Sessions Judge, Kumaon, came to my court and asked me to dispose of 700 civil cases which had been pending in the Almora courts for several years. I promised to carry out his wishes and within six months, I was able to dispose of all the cases. When I met him towards the end of my stay at Almora, he told me that he had upheld my decisions in 75 per cent of the cases and thanked me for the hard work I had put in.

Mr Croft, an I. C. S. officer, had come to India in the 1930s. He served as S. D. O., Baramandal, Almora, and was transferred to the judicial line after three or four years of service. He worked day and night at his files and seemed to have no other interest in life. At one time he used to dispose of cases from Moradabad district in addition to his own. Once I received a summons from Mr Croft to attend his court at Haldwani. He went to Thakur Jodh Singh, tahsildar, and informed him that I would be coming. He asked him to provide me with food. He offered to spare a room in the Sessions House to accommodate me. Thakur Jodh Singh assured him that he would make

satisfactory arrangements for my board and lodging and that he need not worry. I had seen many District and Sessions Judges, both English and Indian, in Kumaon division but none, except Mr Croft, was so considerate.

Sarla Behn's Trial

An unpleasant case I handled at Almora was that of Sarla Behn, an English disciple of Mahatma Gandhi. She lived partly at Almora and partly at Kausani working for the uplift of village women. She would meet village women at work and tell them how to raise children and be better housewives. She would even go to the extent of combing their hair and picking lice. The village women adored her.

Sarla Behn was arrested and prosecuted for preaching hatred and disaffection against the Government. The S.D.M. transferred the case to me. She was defended by Sri Debi Datta Pant, a very able lawyer and a staunch nationalist who later became an M. P. and died in a road accident in Delhi. Pandit Debi Datta argued the case very ably. The prosecution witnesses in those days were generally police personnel, for most people did not like to depose against political offenders. Her trial pricked my conscience and I could not raise my head during the whole trial. Sarla Behn had come to India to do her bit to improve the condition of Indian women. She had left her home to lead a life of poverty and suffering. These thoughts flashed through my mind again and again and disturbed my equanimity throughout the trial. Another factor which distressed me to a considerable extent was the fact that she had

to keep standing in the dock for hours on end. She was sentenced to one month's simple imprisonment. The only remark she made was that she expected two years.

The Deputy Commissioner, Mr Donaldson, told me that the sentence was very lenient and disproportionate to the offence committed by her. I explained that her noble birth and the technical nature of the offence were the extenuating circumstances. But he could not be convinced and as further argument with him on the subject would not serve any useful purpose, I took leave and went away. I now noticed, whenever I visited Mr Donaldson at his bungalow, he would let me stand for a minute or two before asking me to take a chair. His behaviour particularly struck me as humiliating. After this, whenever I visited him, I made it a point to take a chair without waiting to be offered one.

Trip to Dehra Dun

The U. P. Government had a proposal before it to survey the hills from air, but before they could take a decision on it they sent me to discuss this with the Surveyor-General of India at Dehra Dun. I had done the Askot settlement a few years ago and also those of Garhwal and Bhabar. I met the Surveyor-General in his office. Before we settled down to business, he took me out to show a tent fixed for me. There was a cot within and a pitcher of water. A Gorkha orderly was there to look after me. I was greatly touched by his kindness and expressed my gratitude. It took us one hour to discuss the various points. I brought to his

notice the fact that there were pockets of land, particularly the valley terraces, which would not be clearly visible from the air. He saw my viewpoint. The other questions raised were of minor importance. He answered them and satisfied me. Having done the business for the day, he called his peon to take me round the Survey of India Museum. We had another discussion the next day followed by a visit to the museum again. I could not see the whole of it the previous day. I met him again on the third day. He asked me if I wanted to stay longer at Dehra Dun. I replied in the negative. He saw me off some distance when I left. I was overwhelmed with his kindness. The Surveyor-General's report was with the Deputy Commissioner before I reached Almora. He commented most favourably on my knowledge of survey operations and praised me to an extent which I never deserved.

Worst Year

My one year's stay at Almora under Mr Donaldson was the most unhappy year of my service. He burdened me with heavy work. Even the political cases, which should have been normally tried by the S. D. M., were sent on to me for trial. I was in charge of the nazarat, revenue and judicial record rooms and the copying department. I was now 54 and could not cope with the situation. Besides, Mr Donaldson often used to ask me to speak on many files and I had to go to his bungalow against my wishes. When informed of my arrival, he would not meet me immediately.

Mr Acton, Commissioner of Kumaon division,

now asked Mr Donaldson to persuade me to take leave. He wanted to post a favourite of his to Almora. Mr Donaldson, far from telling me the real fact, told me that I needed rest and that I must apply for leave. I informed him I was the best judge of my health and not he and that I would not apply. He often pressed me on the subject but got the same reply. On my next visit, he laid his cards on the table and told me that the Commissioner wanted to post a man of his to Almora in my place. I told Mr Donaldson that had he brought this fact to my notice, I would have applied for leave at once. That very day, I put in an application for four months' leave and submitted it to the Deputy Commissioner for transmission to the Secretary, U. P. Government. Those were war days and four months' leave could not be granted. They sanctioned me only two months' leave. I had not many friends high up. But I remembered Mr Croft. I wrote to him stating how I was being compelled to take leave at the fag end of my service. Mr Croft replied that he would speak to Mr Finlay, who had been posted as Commissioner of Kumaon division. I had served under Mr Finlay for several years and I also wrote him a letter. He wrote to me not to go on leave and informed Mr Donaldson accordingly.

"You went over my head to the Commissioner," he said at my next visit. I told him that two months did not suffice for me. "Where did you want to go?" he asked thumping the table. Piqued at his behaviour, I thumped the table equally hard and said, "I wanted to go to Kailash." He was not prepared for this show of anger and was taken aback.

Soon after, I received an order for my transfer to Lucknow. The Chief Secretary wrote to Mr Donaldson that I was wanted for the Rationing Department. I was almost on the verge of retirement. I found myself unfit to stand the heat of the plains during summer. Bijnor had been enough education. I suffered from a serious attack of dysentery and had to take one month's leave on medical certificate. After the termination of the leave, I applied in disgust for 28 months' leave preparatory to retirement. Mr Donaldson forwarded it to the Commissioner, but Mr Finlay withheld it.

Though I went on working at Almora, I did not care to meet Mr Donaldson now for I thought he had a hand in my transfer. One day he rang me up and asked me to meet him at his bungalow. I had to go.

"Do you think, I had a hand in your transfer?" he asked.

"Yes, I thought so."

"How did you come to this conclusion?"

"You were displeased with me."

"I was not displeased, I was annoyed."

"There is only a shade of difference between displeasure and annoyance."

Mr Donaldson then showed me all the correspondence which he had carried on with the Chief Secretary, U.P. Government, in connection with my transfer to Lucknow. He had written to the Chief Secretary that I was not in a fit state of health, that my transfer to the plains would ruin my health and that I was doing excellent work in the hills. Since I had taken one month's leave and the post at Lucknow

needed to be filled up immediately, my transfer was postponed for some time. I was now waiting for the result of my application for 28 months' leave preparatory to retirement.

Mr Finlay visited Almora to inspect the district office. I went to see him and related to him the whole story. He told me that he had not forwarded my application to the Government and that I should not be so *ziddi* as to take long leave. He picked up the civil list, showed me that Mr Donaldson was senior to him. He also told me Mr Donaldson wanted to stay on in Almora to save himself from further eye trouble and that he had refused to become the Commissioner of Kumaon division.

Mr Finlay further asked me to go to Mr Donaldson and persuade him to write to him (the Commissioner) that I be transferred to some hill station in Kumaon division. If he wrote a line, he (the Commissioner) would post me to Naini Tal in the interest of my health. I replied that I would never meet the man again and requested him to forward my application for leave and retirement to the Government. The then S.D.O. of Kashipur was eager for a transfer and Mr Finlay wanted me to be posted there. The S.D.O. of Kashipur lived at Naini Tal during the rains. I had only a year and few months to serve to complete the age of 55 years for retirement.

17. Return to Tarai

The transfer to Kashipur was welcome. It was to be my last posting. The year was 1945. According to legend, Kashipur existed in the time of the Pandavas and once formed the capital of the Birats who owned numberless cows. A deputy collector, perhaps Pandit Rameshwar Prasad, with the help of the Archaeological Department, excavated an ancient site close by and recovered some earthen pots. These speak for the antiquity of the town. Kashipur owed its importance to trade, which it carried on with the people of Almora, Naini Tal, Garhwal and Nepal. The Khatris and Baniyashave particularly played an important part in contributing to the prosperity of the town. There are many families of Almora Brahmins settled there. They had migrated there with a descendant of the Chand Rajas. The Chand Raja's palace is now in ruins and most of the Raja's land has been sold, for the kunwars now stay at Barhapur, in Bijnor district. The famous *garha* cloth woven by the weavers of Kashipur and Jaspur was once in great demand in the hills. In fact, this was the only cloth which once served both the sexes. Still there is a fair demand for it among the poorer sections of the population.

Among the leading families there were the

Chaubes. They had rendered valuable assistance to the British Government during the mutiny of 1857. In recognition of it, they had received some villages. The then Raja of Kashipur had also received grants of land in Bijnor district for the same reason. Close by is Ramnagar, the railway head. It is to some extent peopled by the Kashipur Baniyas who buy chillies in the hills and export them to the plains. They also do brisk trade in mustard. Cloth, of course, is their chief trade.

On arrival at Kashipur, I found the court cases in heavy arrears. The plains deputy collectors, who were posted to Kashipur, knew very little of the civil law and postponed civil cases as long as they possibly could. A civil case had been pending in the court for seven years and the District and Sessions Judge of Kumaon division wrote to me that the case must be disposed of as quickly as possible. It was a money suit filed by a cloth merchant of Kashipur against a trader of Agra. A heap of *bahikhatas* (ledgers) had to be gone through and no expert had been appointed to submit a report on them. I had neither the time nor the knowledge to go through them. The evidence produced by the parties was recorded and I went through a large mass of documentary evidence and picked up what I considered the most important pieces of evidence. In a single day, I went through almost all the evidence, wrote the judgment and passed a decree for Rs 1,500 in favour of the plaintiff. I thought the higher courts would do justice if some important points escaped my notice. An appeal was preferred against my judgment in the court of the District

Judge. He dismissed the plaintiff's suit and reversed my judgment. The plaintiff went to the High Court against the judgment of the District Judge. The High Court upheld my judgment. The case work at Kashipur was very heavy and the S. D. O. had to sit from 10 a.m. to 6 p.m. and even then he found it difficult to finish the day's work. There was neither a munsif nor a judicial officer to assist the S. D. O. and he had to do all civil, criminal, revenue and miscellaneous work single handed.

The Kashipur people had also taken a leading part in the 1942 movement. The Government wanted to raise a war loan of Rs 1,00,000 from Kashipur and I was asked to collect it. Judging from the prosperity of the Khattris and Baniyas, this amount was not unreasonable, but times had changed and the authority of the S. D. O. was on the wane. Besides, I was on the verge of retirement and none cared for me much. I invited the principal traders to my house and made a request to them to contribute liberally towards the war loan. I explained to them that it was merely a loan and that they would get back their money. But the response was very feeble. At the next meeting, I held out the threat that their gun licences would be confiscated if they gave evasive replies. This had the desired effect and promises for about Rs 1,00,000 were made on the spot and the money was actually paid the next day.

I took four months' leave preparatory to retirement and left Kashipur in May 1945.

Armed with an Intermediate certificate, Govind Ram Kala set out for a job in 1911. The opportunities then were excellent. Starting as a teacher, he did his stint as sub-deputy inspector of schools in the Naini Tal Tarai. He went over to the Survey of India and left it because he did not like the life there. He was nominated naib tahsildar, worked his way up and retired as deputy collector in the U.P. Civil Service.

Life was raw and interesting in the hill districts and the Tarai in the early twenties and thirties. The memoirs are a magistrate's bird's eye view of the working of the Raj at the district level. He talks of the temperamental collectors who had to be looked after — Wyndham for one, a friend of Jim Corbett, who shared his passion for tigers — Pandit Pant, the lawyer, Sarla Behn, who had to be sent to prison for "picking lice", of his brushes with authority and the unorthodox ways the Raj was run. Govind Ram Kala retired from the U.P. Civil Service in 1945.

Rs. 25



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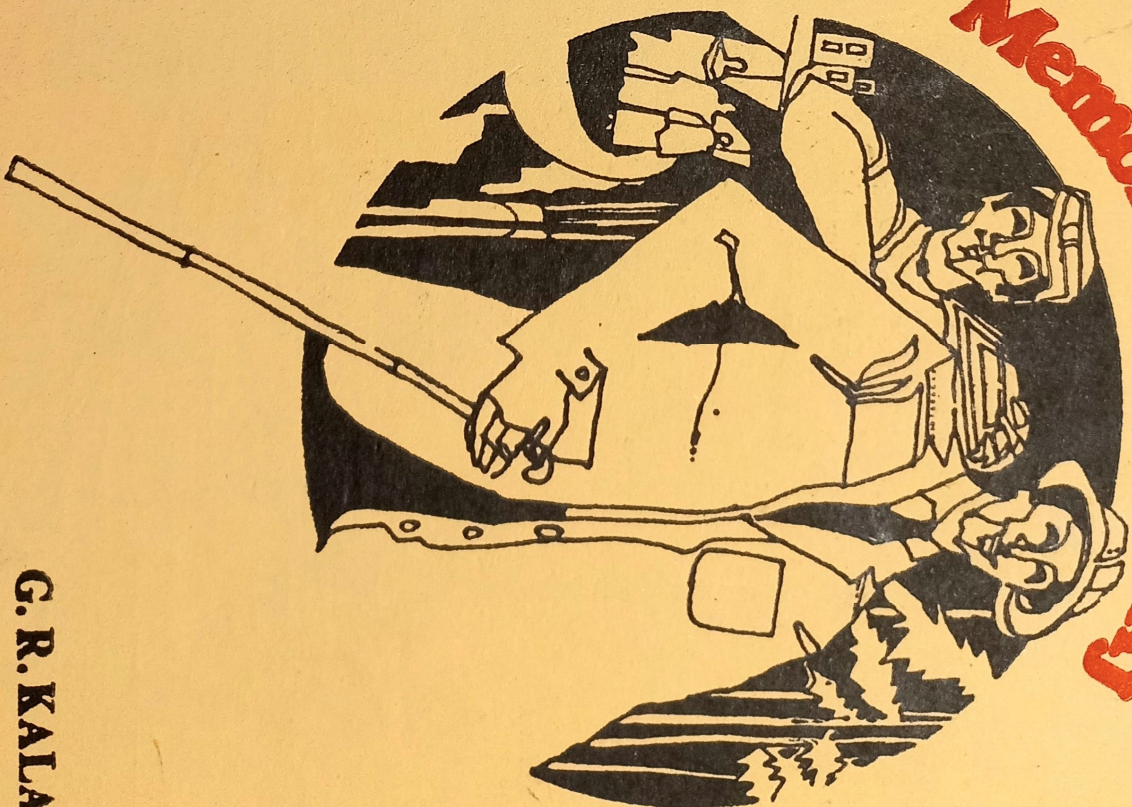


Kala

MEMOIRS OF THE RAJ

MUKUL

Memiors of the Raj



G. R. KALA